

# The Good Shepherd

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter **the sheepfold by the door** but climbs in by another way, that man is **a thief and a robber**.

<sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is **the shepherd** of the sheep.

<sup>3</sup> To him **the gatekeeper** opens. **The sheep** hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

<sup>4</sup> When he has brought out **all his own**, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

<sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

<sup>6</sup> This **figure of speech** Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **I am the door** of the sheep.

<sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

<sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone **enters by me**, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came **that they may have life** and have it abundantly.

<sup>11</sup> **I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd **lays down his life for the sheep**.

<sup>12</sup> He who is **a hired hand** and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

<sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life for the sheep**.

<sup>16</sup> And **I have other sheep** that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be **one flock, one shepherd**.

<sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

<sup>19</sup> There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.

<sup>20</sup> Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?"

<sup>21</sup> Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

*John 10:1-21*

## Church and Heaven

The book of Hebrews is an extended liturgy. It was originally read in church by the churches to the people sitting in the worship service. **Hebrews 12:22-23** says, "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." In this verse you have several things that are the same thing: Mt. Zion = the city of the living God = heavenly Jerusalem = angels in festal gathering = the church of the firstborn enrolled in heaven.

### Five Identical Things in Hebrews 12:22-23

Mt. Zion

City of the Living God

Heavenly Jerusalem

Angels in Festal Gathering

Church of the Firstborn Enrolled in Heaven

You will notice here that the first three items describe **the same place** while the last two describe **the beings present** in that place. Therefore, you might not think they are all five describing the same thing. However, let us ask, what is church without someone in it? An empty building and no church at all. Likewise, what is Mt. Zion without someone worshiping on it? Just a mountain. Therefore, those present in the place make the place what it is.

What I want you to notice now is how **earthly things are compared with heavenly things**. Mt. Zion is an earthly mountain over across the big pond (Atlantic) and the little pond (Mediterranean) in that city called Jerusalem. Yet it is equated with “*heavenly* Jerusalem.” In God’s plan for creating the heavens and the earth, he intentionally made the visible physical creation a copy or representation of the invisible spiritual creation. Imagine the earth as a mirror. This mirror is a reflection of heavenly things. People go wrong when they forget this

or think that the ultimate reality is the temporary physical thing rather than the lasting spiritual counterpart (though the heavens and earth will be remade).

The Hebrews passage mentions “church.” When we think of church we normally think of that visible place where we all go and assemble. Sometimes it might be a special building made for such purposes. Other times it might be someone’s house or merely a place where we are gathered. But in each case, we can see those gathered and the place where they gather. Yet notice in Hebrews here that there is a “church” of the firstborn **in heaven**. To come to the physical church is to come to the heavenly church, to be lifted up to heavenly places. As on earth, so in heaven. This speaks of church in its **invisible** sense, not because it is invisible, but because those who dwell there have died and gone to an invisible place called heaven. So when we worship here, we also gather with saints who have gone before us who are worshiping God in their abode too (and let’s not forget the angels who are praising God along with us).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Further Study: The Westminster Confession of Faith makes the distinction between the catholic/universal church and the visible church (WCF 25.1-2). The London Baptist Confession of Faith likewise speaks of the catholic/universal/invisible church and then of visible saints (though it does not seem to like the term visible “church” (LBC 26.1-2).

## John 9 and 10

Today I'm looking at **John 10:1-21**. We'll look at this passage from one perspective this week, and **another next week**. But first, you may wonder, what happened to John 9? We studied this chapter back in John 5 when we compared it with the story of the man Jesus healed. I'm not going to rehash what has already been said except to remind you that in both chapters Jesus heals someone. But the two chapters reveal two very different reactions to Jesus by those being healed. After the first healing, which was not received well, Jesus goes to a mountain and feeds the multitude, but we soon discover that those who were following him were only doing so because he fed and healed them. Theirs was **a superficial belief**. Only the disciples stayed with Jesus.

John 9 has a slightly different function. Now, we see that **some are actually receiving Jesus** not because he heals them, but because they accept who he says he is.<sup>2</sup> The formerly blind man says here, **"Lord, I believe, and he worshiped him"** (**John 9:39**).<sup>3</sup> Prior to Jesus' death, there were not many who displayed such faith. This man did.

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<sup>2</sup> In this way, they are like the Samaritans and the woman at the well (John 4).

<sup>3</sup> "I believe" is his "creed" that we talked about last week.

Not only that, the man worshiped Jesus and Jesus accepted his worship! This is a stunning display of the deity of Jesus Christ and Jesus' acknowledgment of his own deity. Jesus did so because he was God.

Yet, many more still refused to believe. At the top of the list are the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. They were the people putting doubts in the minds of the crowds and the blind man and his family, so that they would not trust Jesus. In essence, **they were teaching very bad things** about Christ. So Jesus said, “**For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.**’ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, ‘**Are we also blind?**’ Jesus said to them, ‘**If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say “We see,” your guilt remains**” (**John 9:39-41**).

John 10 runs with this idea. Jesus now confronts these Pharisees in a rather dramatic way. It is similar to what we see in the other gospels, particularly when he begins to call down **woes** upon them and call them things like a **brood of vipers** and **whitewashed tombs**. These were supposed to be the teachers of Israel, but Jesus is going to tell them what they actually are. In **John 10:1** he uses the

language of “**thieves and robbers.**” That’s not much better than being called a whitewashed tomb and a brood of vipers.

John 10 begins with a “**parable**” (**John 10:6**, KJV) or what the ESV calls “**a figure of speech**”. The word used here is not *parable* (*parabolé*) but *paroimia*. It is an “**unusual manner of speaking**” such as a **proverb** or a **riddle** or a **simile** or a **metaphor**. The story does remind us in some ways of a parable and yet it isn’t really told like a story. It is told more like a riddle.

Jesus talks about a **sheepfold**, a **door** (*thura*), **thieves and robbers** (**John 10:1**); a **shepherd** and **sheep** (2); and a **gatekeeper** (3). In this saying, we have a bunch of sheep running around. These sheep have a shepherd. The shepherd’s job is to bring the sheep into the sheepfold or the sheep pen. There is a single entrance or door for this pen; there is no other way in or out for them. The door has a gate and the once the shepherd has them penned in, he becomes the gatekeeper, protecting the sheep inside. But some seek to get into the pen another way. Perhaps they climb over. Perhaps they dig under. Perhaps they cut a hole in the fence and go through that way. Jesus says that any attempt to get into the pen other than

through the door is an attempt to sneak in. The only purpose of this would be to steal the sheep. What is Jesus talking about?

## The Sheepfold—Israel and the Church

How are we to understand what Jesus is saying? Since it is a story, it is open to some interpretation. As usual, I think the best place to start is with other Scripture. Let's ask, is there anything from the OT that Jesus might be keying on in telling his parable? The answer is **Ezekiel 34** (among others; see also **Isa 56:9-12**; **Jer 23:1ff**; **Zech 11**). God says “**Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds.**” These “**shepherds of Israel**” are Israel's leaders, her teachers, her priests, her kings. Their sins were feeding themselves while neglecting the feeding and care of the sheep (**vv. 2-4**). This neglect of food took both a **physical and a spiritual** form. That is, they neglected the physical needs of the people *and* they taught lies about God. They did not take care of the sick *and* they let the sheep run around spiritually lost. Thus, the sheep were scattered.



In this context, Jesus' words about thieves and robbers apply to the religious leaders who “are more interested in fleecing the sheep than in guiding, nurturing and guarding them.”<sup>4</sup> What do you do when you fleece a sheep? You use it. You use it for its wool, for what it can give you. But now, here is where the introduction to the sermon comes into view. I want you to hear how Calvin interpreted this. He said, “As Christ had to do with scribes and priests, who were reckoned pastors of the church, it was necessary that they should be divested of the honor of this title” (Calvin, *Commentary on John 10:1-6*). Calvin takes the leaders of Israel and says that they were the leaders of *the church* of that day. He speaks of Israel as the church.

Let's think about what he is saying here. If the Shepherds are the teachers of Israel and the sheep are the people of Israel, then the sheepfold must be the covenant God made with Israel, the purpose for which he chose Israel, the place to which Israel was called. Calvin speaks of this place as “the church.”

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<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 382.

There are many today that would take issue with Calvin here, for they do not understand Israel and the church to be the same thing, not in any sense. So I want to spend a moment clarifying what he means. We Reformed people do refer to the OT people of God in some sense as “the church.” “Church” is simply the Greek word *ekklesia*. The Greek translation of the OT (originally written in Hebrew) is called the Septuagint (LXX). Many times the LXX translates the assembly of Israel for worship as *ekklesia* (Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16, etc).

The most important of these in my opinion is Psalm 22:22, “I will declare your name to my brothers: in the midst of the church (*ekklesia*) will I sing praise to thee.” This is a Psalm of David and he refers to the assembly of Jews as the church. The reason this is important is because Hebrews quotes it (Heb 2:12), referring to the OT and NT church as those Jesus calls brothers. In other words, there is some sense in which the assembly of Christians is the same church as the assembly of OT Jewish saints.

To be clear, and this is important, no one is saying that the nation of Israel is the church today. This is because “Israel” can be spoken of in two different senses.

There is a national entity, a biological entity, a physical entity called Israel. These are the Jewish people. As we have seen, the Pharisees thought that this physical biological birth as Jewish people guaranteed that they were Abraham's offspring. But as it regards the sheep pen, this was irrelevant.

The physical is a mirror of the spiritual reality. It is not the reality itself. It points to the invisible reality. The invisible reality is the "church" to which we refer. It is the "church" that Hebrews 12 is talking about. It is the place to which our souls belong by faith. It is our home. "Israel" is used in this spiritual sense as well, and it refers to those who have faith in Christ—OT or NT. It refers to God's elect. Thus, "Not all who are of Israel are Israel" (Rom 9:6). Calvin is talking about the church in this spiritual sense. This is the sheepfold.

Yet, I've found that many despise the church in our day. Perhaps they do not despise the invisible church, but they do despise the visible church. One is "religion," the other is "spirituality." But as I've said, the physical is a mirror of the spiritual. How can you say that you do not despise God's invisible church when you do despise his visible church, which is a copy of the other? Our passage

today forces us to think seriously about God's church in both senses.

At any rate, the duty of the leaders of Israel was to be the means by which the sheep would enter this sheep fold. Their duty was two-fold. They were to take care of [the physical needs of the people](#). This is not the time to get into political theories of how this was to be done. Nor would they be particularly helpful, since Israel's politics and religion were merged in ways that do not hold true for any nation today (since no nation is God's chosen national people). I will say that this duty is also a reflection of their other duty.

Taking care of the physical needs showed that the leaders understood the spiritual needs that lay behind them. The physical reveals the spiritual. So they were also to take care of the spiritual needs of the people. In this way, obeying their two-fold duty was an acknowledgement that God created the heavens and the earth, the visible and the invisible, matter and spirit.

It is even stranger to me that in our day many who despise the visible church are so focused on helping the poor that they neglect the spiritual duty (as if feeding someone a bowl of soup were more important than telling

them about Christ). Others are more consistent, showing no regard for the physical well being of others just as they show little regard for the visible church. It may be consistent, but it is monstrous. We must not be schizophrenic Christians like this. God created both realities. We have duties in both. We must have respect for both while understanding their relationship to one another. This is especially true of the leaders.

The two realities have a relationship to one another like two dancers on a dance floor. **Poverty** is a reflection of being **poor in spirit**. Both are real; one points to the other. Thus, Luke can quote Jesus as saying, “**Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God**” (**Luke 6:20**), while Matthew can quote him, “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**” (**Matt 5:3**).

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| <b>Luke 6:20</b> | Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God       |
| <b>Matt 5:3</b>  | Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven |

## Shepherds, Robbers, and Thieves

This connection between Israel and the church means that there is a direct application that must be made to our own day and Calvin sees it well. “No plague is more destructive to the Church, than when wolves ravage under the garb of *shepherds*.” This applies to Jesus’ audience and to our own days. It speaks of false teachers that come into the churches and refuse to do what they are commanded to do. He goes on, “There is nothing by which weak and ignorant persons are more alarmed, than when they see the sanctuary of God occupied by the greatest enemies of the Church; for it is not easy to make them understand, that it is the doctrine of Christ which the *shepherds* of the Church so fiercely resist. Besides, as the greater part of men are led into various errors by false doctrines, while the views and expectations of each person are directed to others, scarcely any person permits himself to be conducted into the right path.”

How do wolves ravage, steal, and destroy? First, they claim to speak for God, when in fact they do not. For example, **their worship is corrupt**. Jeremiah gives an example, “**They set up their abominations in the house**

that is called by my name, to defile it. They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin” (Jer 32:34-35). Earlier, in Jeroboam’s day (the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel), he had simply invented methods of worship that were not commanded. It didn’t seem like a big deal to have a new place of worship, since you couldn’t go down to Jerusalem now since it was now another country. Same goes for a new priesthood, new festival days and so on. But these religious innovations made Jeroboam the model of an evil king; all other kings were held up to his wicked standard.

Also, their teaching is corrupt. Again Jeremiah, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds” (Jer 14:14). Their goal is “to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another” (Jer 23:27). Today it is the same as Paul says, “The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears

they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Tim 4:3-4). To piggy-back on last week, this can take the form of false doctrines of God, Christ, the church, and so on. In other words, they are heretics, people who lie about God from the pulpit.

This can also take the form of bad moral teaching. They refuse to teach God’s law anymore, and the result is either legalistic laws they make up or a spirit of rebellion (antinomianism) which says we don’t have to obey any laws anymore. The law has not passed away into oblivion, but still guides our lives even as it still reflects God’s character. You must be leery of teachers that don’t know how to teach the law, and sad to say, this is one of the greatest problems in the church today.

But it can be even more subtle than this. They may just not say anything of relevance or importance at all. They may hide the truth as much as teach false truth. They might obscure it with happy things, clappy things, entertainment, amusement, self-improvement, politics, and so on. So much of the church today is just irrelevant, pointless fluff. It is worthless like the chaff that blows off



the wheat or the lint that comes off your clothes in the dryer (or maybe into your belly button). But all of these things are what it means to steal and destroy as robbers and thieves of the sheep. Thus, they are not really shepherds at all. They can call themselves pastors, but they are as far from being pastors as Earth is from Pluto. Christians must not be deceived and must not tolerate the voices of those who would seek to destroy them.

## Sheep

But Christians have a big problem in this regard. The problem is that they are sheep. Sheep are not the smartest of animals. In fact, they are rather dumb. They get themselves into all kinds of trouble. They get lost (**Isaiah 53**: we like sheep have gone astray). They get tied up in thickets. They are easy prey for wolves and other animals. It is extremely difficult for sheep to know when danger lurks about. This is why God gave them shepherds.

But they do have something going for them. They are **fiercely loyal** and they **know the voice of their Shepherd**. Thus Jesus talks about how the sheep “**hear [the] voice**” of the shepherd (**John 10:3**). I’m told that Western shepherds use **sheep dogs** to drive the sheep

where they want them. But in the Near East, both in Jesus' day and our own, the shepherd uses his own voice to call them. Thus, they know his voice, they respond to his voice, but they do not respond to the voice of another claiming to be the shepherd.

This provides the hope for our passage. It does so in two ways. First, the question arises, what are we to do about those who seek to enter the church (the sheepfold) like thieves and robbers, pretending to be shepherds? First, before you can do anything, you have to recognize when a voice you hear is the voice of a true shepherd or a false shepherd (shepherd is in small "s" here). Of someone comes in the wrong way, do you recognize the false voice of the thief?

But **how do you recognize a true voice from a false voice?** Here we return to the text. First, it is imperative to remember something I've already said, that the shepherd speaks to the sheep. **"The sheep hear his voice"** (John 10:3). Since he speaks to them, they will know his voice. This is a word of comfort so that you may know it really is possible to hear the voice of the shepherd. But who is this shepherd?

Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd” (vs. 11). This is a remarkable statement, not only because it is another of his famous “I AMs,” but also because it is fulfillment of prophecy. Ezekiel 34 said, “No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them ... Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them ... I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, I myself will make them lie down .. I will seek the lost ... I will bind up the injured ... I will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats ... I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd” (vv. 10-12, 15-17; 23).

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? He is the fulfillment of the LORD’s prophecy as spoken to Ezekiel. He is the Shepherd. He is “David.” Please remember, the prophecy was not that David would somehow return from the dead, but that a king in David’s line would fulfill the promises. But it could be no ordinary king, for David was himself a sheep. Remember

**Psalm 23:1**, “The LORD is my Shepherd ...” David needed his own Shepherd. But Jesus is the Shepherd, because Jesus is David’s Lord (**Psalm 110:1**).

Similar to the prophecy in Ezekiel, what does Jesus say the Shepherd does? What is his job? He **calls them by name** (**vs. 3**). Like Lazarus whom we will see in the next chapter, he calls the dead by name and they come to life. He brings them out (**vs. 4**). Again like Lazarus, they come out of their tombs. He goes before them (**vs. 4**). The sheep in the wilderness are led by the Shepherd who protects them from all harm. He gives saves them and gives them life (**vs. 10**). Jesus brings us to heaven, to the church we have been discussing. He lays down his life for the sheep (**vs. 11, 15**). Jesus dies for our sins. All of this you may trust because Jesus picks up his life again (he raises himself from the dead (**vs. 18**) and he opens the eyes of the blind (**vs. 21**).

But there is a problem. When Jesus was alive, he could speak to someone through a physical voice. But how to Christ speak to us today? Today he is in heaven. So how do we hear his voice? This is a question that puzzles little children and mature adults. And it is critical that you have a good answer.

I would submit that he does so (ordinarily) in **three ways** today.<sup>5</sup> First, he does so by the Holy Spirit. Though not specifically in this passage, we know in other parts of John that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth (**John 7:39; 15:26**). His job is to bear witness about Christ to a person and teaches us that we are, indeed, children of God (**Rom 8:16**). That is, when we hear the truth, when we hear about Christ, when we receive him by faith, the Spirit now lives in us and confirms that what we have heard is the truth. This is his task, to display and glorify and confirm Jesus Christ to a person's soul. Anyone who truly knows Christ has had this experience and they themselves can bear witness that they know when they are hearing Jesus because of the Holy Spirit.

But lest you think this is merely some subjective private experience, understand that you also hear the voice of Christ through **the word of God**. This is the second thing. Of course, Jesus is the Word, but I'm speaking here about **Holy Scripture**. In his commentary on John, **Chrysostom** made this interesting observation,

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<sup>5</sup> By "ordinarily," I want to say that if Christ *wanted* to show himself personally to someone as he did the Apostle Paul (Acts 9), he could do that. But we have no guarantees that he will do this, and in fact, apparitions of Jesus or Mary or what have you should be met with a great deal of skepticism. Jesus has told us how he speaks to us, as I will now explain.

“He calls the Scriptures ‘a door,’ for they bring us to God, and open to us the knowledge of God, they make the sheep, they guard them, and suffer not the wolves to come in after them.”<sup>6</sup> I’m not entirely sure why he calls Scripture the door (citing **John 10:2**) when Jesus calls himself the door (**John 10:7**), but let me venture a guess.

First, let me note that it is interesting that he doesn’t say that the church is the door, as you might expect if a Roman Catholic priest were preaching to you. As I’ve said, the church is the sheep pen, not the door. Scripture guards the sheep pen. As he goes on to say, “**Scripture, like some sure door, bars the passage against the heretics, placing us in a state of safety as to all that we desire, and not allowing us to wander.**”

Why might he say this about Scripture? I believe it is because of how rich our passage is with ... Scripture. As we have seen, Jesus’ whole story is a fulfillment of Ezekiel 10, so Jesus isn’t making this stuff up as he goes along. All the prophets were held up to Scripture, to God’s

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<sup>6</sup> John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. John", trans. G. T. Stupart In , in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, Volume XIV: Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 213.

word. Jesus says that those who came before (not meaning Moses or David etc., but false prophets) were thieves and robbers, and the true sheep did not listen to them (**John 10:8**). Rather, they listened to God's Word/word. So we hear the voice of Jesus through the Scripture.

Finally, we hear the voice of Jesus through **under shepherds** who speak the word of God faithfully, fully, and truly. Yes, Jesus has left his church with pastors whom he has called to lead the sheep to the sheepfold. Jesus is not saying that there are no longer shepherds (small "s"), but that true under shepherds are also sheep that follow and know Christ's voice. All they do is under his authority.

Your job, as sheep, is **to listen to the voices you hear**. Listen with discernment. Pay attention to the voices. Use wisdom. Use your conscience. Be in step with the Holy Spirit. Yet, do so with humility, rather than arrogance, thinking you know everything. Do so with a receptive spirit, rather than always being sceptical, for this is the way the Bereans accepted Paul, "**They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so**" (**Act 17:11**). If you feel like

you are always on guard when you hear someone speak, then there is a problem, either with the speaker or with yourself. As you try to discern which it is, don't set yourself up as the supreme judge, but remember God has saved you to his church. Let the church help you in understanding if you or the voice you are hearing is the problem. Listen in concert with the church. Shepherds do not speak of their own authority, and what they say must be in line with historical Christianity. There is a role for the church in all of this, it's just that this role must not usurp Scripture. Yet, **don't become your own little pope of one.**

Through it all, remember that our common goal is to enter into the sheepfold together. We are coming Christ, the savior of our souls. We come through the door, as those brought in by the Great Shepherd. We come to the church of the firstborn in heaven. We come to a myriad of angels in festal gathering. We come through the blood of Jesus Christ, which speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. We come to worship and to thank the Lord that he has not left his sheep to their own wandering ways or to the wolves and lions that seek to devour and destroy them. We come thanking him that he has called us to



himself, and it even now leading us forward in a great procession, homeward to the place where even now he is preparing for those he loves, who have been given to him by the Father.