

Commentary on John 10:7-18

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, May 13, 2012

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, May 13, 2012**, is from **John 10:7-18**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse by verse **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** below. The **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the **[Bible Lesson Forum](#)**, will aid teachers in class preparation and in conducting class discussion. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **[International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#)**. The weekly **[International Bible Lesson](#)** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **[The Oklahoman](#)** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary **John 10:7-18**

(John 10:7) So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

Jesus compares His followers to sheep in order to illustrate some of the qualities of His followers, and also His ability and willingness to care for them. The sheep in the sheepfold know the true God and recognize when someone has been sent to them from God. The sheep are protected in an enclosure and the gate and enclosure protect the sheep from wild animals, thieves, and those that would harm the sheep. The enclosure and closed gate also protects the sheep from wandering away from the shepherd and getting hurt. The sheep are often in this enclosure at night, when shepherds are not in the field with them. Jesus is the gate to the protective enclosure; so, He will not admit anyone into His sheepfold that He does not approve of being there. The sheepfold is the Kingdom of God or the true Church of Jesus Christ as defined and described by the Bible.

(John 10:8) All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

Prior to Jesus' coming, some came to the Jews and claimed to be the Messiah. Throughout the Old Testament, we learn that some false prophets also came to the Jews and misled some of them, sometimes many of them. Jesus compared these false messiahs and prophets to thieves and bandits; liars who claimed to be sent from God. Those truly committed to following God according to the scriptures were not misled by these false messiahs and false prophets; these were God's sheep. God said of His sheep, “For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD—the remnant of Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be

found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid” (Zephaniah 3:12-13). Some came after Jesus ascended into heaven, and they claimed to be the Messiah. Because of the leadership of a false messiah, the Jews rebelled and the Romans eventually destroyed Jerusalem. Even today, false prophets, false teachers, false messiahs, false religions deceive some, but not those in the sheepfold of God (who may be temporarily confused until God enlightens them by the Holy Spirit using the truth of the Bible).

(John 10:9) I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

The sheep of God do not listen to or follow false prophets, false leaders, and false teachers. To come to God the Father and His sheepfold, the sheep of God come to the gate, Jesus, Who is the only gate into the sheepfold of God, and He is the Savior of the sheep who enter God’s sheepfold through Him. Those who truly seek the truth and the true God will find God and come to Jesus. God said, “When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD” (Jeremiah 29:13-14). Jesus meets all the needs of God’s sheep, and Jesus protects them in the sheepfold (or Kingdom of God).

(John 10:10) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

When we think of different people, groups, and religions that claim to represent God, we know of some that have become known for their killing and destroying. They steal the lives and possessions of those they kill and destroy. Jesus and the true Church of God do not do this evil to others: they love God and their neighbor. Jesus gives life. He gives abundant life. He came into the world to save.

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

Jesus added “shepherd” to the illustration of himself as the “gate.” The “gate” admits and protects those qualified to enter the sheepfold (the sheep, those Jesus has saved). The “shepherd” defends, feeds, and leads the sheep of God out into the world to serve God and share the gospel. To protect and save the sheep of God, the “Good Shepherd” sacrificed His life when He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus not only saves God’s people from external enemies (physical and spiritual), but also from the eternal consequences (and often the temporal consequences) of the foolish, evil, and wrong choices the sheep of God have made. Notice how Jesus defined a “good” person and what this means when He called himself “the ‘good’ shepherd:” “Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone’” (Mark 10:18).

(John 10:12) The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

The hired hand has no financial investment in the owner's flock of sheep. Hired hands work for wages, and the owner of the sheep pays them for their service. Hired hands may reason that the possibility of injury or death in protecting the sheep of someone else is something they should avoid when weighed against what they are being paid as laborers. Hired hands are working for wages and not for the welfare of the sheep. Hired hands will not do what Jesus does, only Jesus can and will do what Jesus does.

(John 10:13) The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

Jesus said that He was not a hired hand. Jesus is the owner of the sheep. Jesus owns the sheepfold of God. He cares for His sheep. Unlike a hired hand, if a sheep is lost, He is the One Who suffers the loss (so Jesus does not lose His sheep, He finds them and carries them back to the sheepfold: see Matthew 18:12-14!). His sheep are valuable and important to Him and to His Father personally. Jesus risked His life; He gave His life and died to save His sheep; He rose from the dead, and still fights against the enemies of His sheep to protect and save them.

(John 10:14) I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

Jesus is not an absent owner of His sheep. Jesus does not leave the care of His sheep to hired hands. Jesus is with His sheep and in a relationship with His sheep, so He knows the needs of His sheep personally, and each one of His sheep know Him. He is good to spend time, to spend eternity, to care for His sheep and all their needs. As they read the Bible, the Holy Spirit helps His sheep hear His voice, know Him, and follow Him.

(John 10:15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

Jesus knows God the Father intimately, just as in any loving father and son relationship. Jesus compared the knowledge He has of His sheep and their knowledge of Him to this closeness of a loving family, to the closeness He has to His Father. The sheep belong to the Father and the Son, and the Son chose to lay down His life in death to save their sheep and bring more sheep into their fold.

(John 10:16) I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Jesus had other sheep that were not Jews. During His ministry, He also had Samaritans and other Gentiles, including some Roman soldiers, come to believe in and follow Him. Throughout the last 2000 years, different people from nations

and languages all around the world have heard the voice of Jesus when someone has shared the truth of the Bible and Jesus with them, and they have come into his flock of sheep. Eventually, God's flock will inherit the earth and Jesus will be their Shepherd, for Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

(John 10:17) For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

The word "loves" in this verse means very satisfied and happy with someone because love for God and others motivates their attitude, thoughts and actions. The Father loved Jesus for Who Jesus is as the Son of God, and He also loved Jesus because of what Jesus did and the reasons for why Jesus did what He did (Love was the grand motive of Jesus for everything He said and did). Jesus does not teach that the Father would not love Him under certain circumstances, because Jesus is the Father's Son. But if Jesus chose not to obey the Father and not to follow the agreement that they made in heaven before Jesus came into the world, then the Father would not be happy with His decision and would not "love" His disobedience and failure to die a sacrificial death.

(John 10:18) No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

When Jesus died on the cross, the devil or wolves in sheep's clothing did not take Jesus' life from Him in the sense of being a victor over Him in death. Roman soldiers hanged Jesus on the cross to murder him, so they needed to be forgiven for their sin, and Jesus prayed they would be forgiven by His Father (see Luke 23:34). But Jesus chose the exact moment of His death (when His atoning sacrifice was finished). Jesus also chose the exact moment to rise from the dead on the first resurrection Sunday. Because His Father commanded Him to do these things, Jesus chose His moment of death and the moment of His resurrection. By doing so, Jesus was obedient to His Father and not disobedient. Jesus obeyed His Father when He chose to remain on the cross and allowed himself to be mocked when some sneered, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him" (Matthew 27:42).

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think "thieves and bandits" is a good description of false messiahs, false prophets, false teachers, and false religious leaders?
2. As the sheep of God, what are some things we can do so we do not get tricked into listening to religious, spiritual, or psychological "thieves and bandits"?

3. What are some things God has done and does for His sheep to keep them safe?
4. Why does Jesus speak so pointedly of there being only one gate, only one flock of sheep, and only one good shepherd?
5. Why might it have been important for Jesus to teach that His Father had commanded Him to use His own power when He laid down His life in death and when He took it up again in rising from the dead?

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