

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 10:16

vs16: God sent the Good Shepherd, first of all, to call to Himself the "sheep" who lived in Israel, but He never intended to stop there. The plan always was to reach the entire world. We hear His great inclusive heart being expressed by Jesus when He said, "And I have other sheep (more of the same kind) which are not from out of this sheepfold, and it is necessary for Me to lead those also. And they will hear My voice, and they will become (there will come into being) one (single) flock of sheep [with] one shepherd" (literal). The group He calls "other sheep" certainly includes believing Jews living in distant lands (Dt 30:4; Isa 60), but Jesus was also prophetically announcing the evangelization of the Gentiles. Later on in this gospel John will make that distinction very clear by explaining that Jesus died, not only for the nation of Israel, "but in order that He might also gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn 11:52). So by using the term "other sheep," the Good Shepherd declared that His assignment from the Father was to gather into His Church, people from different places and cultures and teach them to become "one flock." That means that under Jesus' leadership believers from diverse backgrounds learn to live together harmoniously, because according to God's plan there is only one flock with one Shepherd.

John 10:17-18

vs17-18: This entire passage about the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-18) centers around the fact that Jesus will "lay down" His life to save us (vs11, 15). His death on our behalf is what sets Him apart from all others who claim to be the Savior of God's people (Jn 10:1-2). And His death also qualifies Him to be the "door" through which every person must pass in order to enter God's sheepfold (Jn 10:7). But before He finished this discussion about the Good Shepherd, Jesus wanted His listeners to understand that His upcoming death on their behalf would be something He freely chose to do. It would be a gift of love to His Father and to the world. It was not something that His Father forced Him to do.

John 10:17-18

vs17-18 (continued): At first glance verse 17 appears to say that the reason the Father loved Jesus was because He was going to die on the cross. It reads, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life" (literal). It sounds as if Jesus were saying that God's love was a reward for His obedience. If that were true, it would mean that God's love is conditional, that He only loves people who obey Him and withholds love from those who disobey. But elsewhere the Bible clearly teaches that God's love is unconditional, that He loves the sinner even before he or she repents (Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8), and Jesus Himself declared that God's love for His divine Son is eternal (Jn 5:20; 17:5, 24). When verses 17 and 18 are taken together as one statement which is obviously how Jesus meant them to be understood, a different picture of God's love emerges: We hear Jesus explain that it was because the Father loved Him that He gave Him the freedom to choose whether or not to die, and it was because Jesus loved the Father that He gladly chose to obey.

John 10:17-18

vs17-18 (continued): Here is what I believe the Pharisees (Jn 9:40) heard Jesus say: "This is the way the Father has shown His love for Me: He has given Me complete authority over My life. He will not force Me to die nor does any human have the power to kill Me. I am choosing to lay down My life confident that I will take hold of it again. So My upcoming death is a gift of love. I will do it because I love the Father and long to rescue My 'sheep,' yet I will remain in the grave only as long as I choose to (Jn 2:19-22). Not even death has the power to hold Me. At no point in this process will I be a victim. I will be in full control throughout the entire act of redemption" (paraphrase). In other words, Jesus is teaching us that because the Father loved His Son, He gave Him the freedom to choose whether or not to die, and because the Son loved the Father, and us, He chose to obey.

John 10:19-21

vs19-21: Jesus' statements about the Good Shepherd and the door divided the religious leaders who were listening to Him. Which statements they found most offensive isn't said, but it's likely that it was His claim that He must die in order to save God's sheep. A dying Messiah was not a popular concept among those leaders. John says, "Many of them said: 'He has a demon and raves (yells incoherently like someone who is drunk or insane). Why do you listen to Him?'" (literal). Others evaluated His words more honestly and acknowledged that He was teaching clear lucid thoughts. His statements were anything but senseless raving. That group replied, "These are not the utterances of one who is demonized" (literal). They reasoned: A person might disagree with what Jesus was saying, but His words were certainly not senseless rambling.

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John 10:19-21

vs19-21: Then they pointed to the undeniable miracle which had just taken place: A man who had been born blind could now see clearly. A miracle like that could not be ignored. It required a level of power far beyond anything a demon could produce. Such power could only come from God. Even if they found some of Jesus' teachings troubling, they were willing to admit that God's power was working through Him. **vs19-21** (continued): Again as had so often been the case (Jn 6:52; 7:43; 9:16), Jesus divided this crowd: Some received Him, some rejected Him (Jn 1:11-12); some came toward the Light, some preferred darkness (Jn 3:19-20; 8:12); some were hungry for eternal life, some weren't (Jn 6:27, 33, 35); some were thirsty for the Holy Spirit, some weren't (Jn 7:37); some loved Him, some didn't (Jn 8:42); some honored Him, some dishonored Him (Jn 8:49); some had eyes to see who He was, some were blind (Jn 9:39) and some could hear the Shepherd's voice calling them and some couldn't (Jn 10:3, 27). And that division still takes place today wherever Jesus is proclaimed.

John 10:22

v22: At this verse John ends his description of Jesus' ministry during and immediately after the Feast of Booths (Jn 7:1-10:21) and moves forward in time to another encounter with these religious leaders which took place about seventy days later, during the "Feast of the Dedication" (Chanukah/Festival of Lights). This eight-day festival generally takes place in December. It commemorates the cleansing of the temple which took place in 164 BC after a Jewish revolt liberated Jerusalem from a Greek tyrant named Antiochus Epiphanes. In an effort to end Judaism, Antiochus IV forbade all forms of Jewish worship, including circumcision, Sabbath and owning a Bible. He also desecrated the temple by placing pigs and pagan idols in it. When the Jewish liberators arrived at the temple they found it deserted, its gates burned down and weeds growing everywhere (Josephus, Antiquities, 12.7.6). After purifying the temple, new furnishings were constructed and put in their proper places, including: the seven-branched lampstand, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, veils and the altar of burnt offering (Josephus, Antiquities, 12.7.6). The regular pattern of worship was then restored for the next three years. Jewish tradition remembers a miracle that took place during that restoration in which only one vial of holy oil could be found for the lighting of the seven-branched lampstand. Miraculously, that amount of oil which would normally light the lampstand for one day, lasted for eight days until a new supply of holy oil could be prepared and brought to the temple. One by one eight candles are lit over the course of eight days to remember that miracle.