

CHRIST BEFORE THE MANGER

Lesson 3 w/answers

Christ the Shepherd

We conclude our study this week of "Christ Before the Manger" by looking at Christ as Shepherd. In the course of our study, we will discover the significance of this imagery within both the Old and New Testaments. If we can understand the significance of the Shepherd as it is used in the Old Testament, we can better understand Christ and the impact He had on the Jews of the day as they related this imagery from their Torah (the Old Testament) with respect to what Christ was saying about Himself.

As we approach our celebration of Christmas, it is especially appropriate to look at Christ as our Shepherd and what both the Old and New Testaments have to say about Him in this capacity.

With this in mind, let's look at some very insightful verses and pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten us in ways that we have never seen before, as we discover the deeper truths about our Savior from the "scriptures" -- the Old Testament.

For this lesson, let's consider the following passages and what they reveal to us about Christ as our Shepherd.

1. Read all of John 10:1-42. What a powerful chapter, full of great truths! Answer the questions below, and be sure to cite the verse, or verses, where your answer was found. Remember, we are using the Bible to interpret the Bible, not our opinion, or someone else's opinion; so make sure that you cite your answer with verses.
 - a. Does Jesus claim to be Christ in this passage?
 - i. ANSWER: Yes, multiple times. In the opening verses about the shepherd, John 10:9 is a clear reference to him being the Christ, as also indicated in John 10:17-18. Again, in John 10:25, Jesus plainly states that he told them he was the Christ, but they would not believe him.
 - b. Does Jesus claim to be God in this passage?
 - i. ANSWER: In John 10:30, Jesus states that He and the Father are one -- the same; and in John 10:33, the Jews acknowledge that he is claiming to be God by their actions. They want to stone him for his claim.
 - c. Does He claim to be the Good Shepherd?
 - i. ANSWER: Yes, he specifically states this several times in John 10:11-18.
 - d. What does he say that he will do as the Shepherd?
 - i. ANSWER: He says that he will save his flock and protect them from harm.
 - e. Does this passage speak to the security of all those who believe in Christ?
 - i. ANSWER: Absolutely. Jesus plainly states in John 10:28-29 that our salvation is eternal and that no one can snatch us out of Jesus' hand, or out of God's hand. We are absolutely secure and saved through Jesus; we cannot be lost.
2. What do the verses below each say about Christ as a shepherd?
 - a. 1 Peter 5:4
 - i. ANSWER: It tells us that he is the "Chief" Shepherd and that, at his appearing, we will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away.
 - b. Hebrews 13:20
 - i. ANSWER: He is called the "Great Shepherd of the sheep".
 - c. Matthew 2:6
 - i. ANSWER: He is called the Shepherd of God's people, Israel.
 - d. Matthew 18:10-14
 - i. ANSWER: Christ is the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep.

3. What does the Old Testament tell us about the Shepherd and Christ's coming?
 - a. Ezekiel 34:23
 - i. ANSWER: God is placing one shepherd over us, both Jew and Gentile, and that shepherd is Jesus.
 - b. Ezekiel 37:22
 - i. ANSWER: Just as Jesus will be the one shepherd, so will he also be the one King.
 - c. Ezekiel 37:24
 - i. ANSWER: We see that both the role of shepherd and the role of king will be found in the same person: the seed of David, Jesus.
 - d. Zechariah 11:4-14
 - i. ANSWER: This passage refers to the falling away of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, as they turned their backs on the shepherds that God had put over them.
 - e. Zechariah 13:7
 - i. ANSWER: This passage refers to God's causing the shepherd to be slain and the flock to be scattered. When Christ was crucified, his followers scattered like sheep. So did the Jews, when the Romans came in and destroyed the Temple and scattered them throughout the empire in 70 AD.
4. What did Christ himself say about these prophecies?
 - a. John 10:8
 - i. ANSWER: He said that many came before him claiming to be the shepherd.
 - b. John 10:11
 - i. ANSWER: He said that he was willing to lay down his life for us.
 - c. John 10:14
 - i. ANSWER: He said that he knows us, and we know him. His followers all know him, and anyone who has decided to follow Jesus is personally known by Jesus. Our relationship to him, and his to us, is intimate and not distant.
5. Is Christ the Shepherd evident in Psalm 23?
 - a. ANSWER: Yes; Christ is that Shepherd. Who else could restore my soul?
6. Comment regarding Christ as the Shepherd in the following:
 - a. Isaiah 40:11
 - i. ANSWER: We are carried close to His heart. He cares for us in gentle ways, as a shepherd would, and not harshly.
 - b. Jeremiah 31:10
 - i. ANSWER: Though the Jews are scattered today, Jesus will gather them to Him, just as He gathers us. We are all to be in one flock with one shepherd; and that shepherd is Jesus.
 - c. Ezekiel 34:11-12
 - i. ANSWER: Jesus looks after us, even though we may be scattered; and He comes to rescue us from places where we have been scattered. Even though we may seem to be alone at times, Jesus is there to rescue us and bring us back to safety, protecting us from the evils of the world around us.
7. There are more references in the Old Testament about shepherds. Read the following passages and comment regarding their potential reference to Christ.
 - a. Psalm 100:3
 - i. ANSWER: We are to know that Christ and God are one, and that He made us and we are a part of His family, His flock. He will care for us and protect us, as one of his very own.
 - b. Psalm 95:6-7
 - i. ANSWER: We are the people of His pasture. God our maker is also our shepherd, our savior, and our protector. We were created for worship, to worship the God who made us and watches over us.

As we can see from our brief study, the image of Jesus the Christ as the creator and shepherd of His people has been an integral part of the Biblical text beginning in Genesis and continuing all the way through Revelation.

A thorough analysis and comparison of John 10 and Psalm 23 provides much insight into our great Redeemer and Shepherd. As our Shepherd, he protects us, cares for us, watches over us, and leads us. What better Redeemer could we have than the Greatest Shepherd of all?

Recognizing this imagery during the time of the Manger, the Jews were quick to pick up on Jesus' teaching about the Shepherd, and Christ's role in shepherding His people as the one and only Son of God. Looking through the eyes of the Old Testament picture of a shepherd, we gain a deeper understanding of Christ and our relationship to Him.

As we approach the eve of the celebration of His birth, let us, His sheep, worship Him and God the Father, who sent Him to save us and to watch over us as our Good Shepherd.

Merry Christmas everyone! May God bless you richly during this Christmas season as we continue to study His Holy Word together.

In Christ,

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