

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What Child is This?

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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What Child Is This?

What child is this? Do you know that song? That's the theme of our message to you this morning. What child is this who laid to rest on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthem sweet while shepherds watch are keeping. That's the Christmas question really. What child is this? The answers to that question are myriad . Some say that he was just a good teacher.

But good teachers don't claim to be God. Some say that he was only a good example, but good examples don't hang around prostitutes drunks and dirty politicians. Others say that he was a religious madman, but madmen don't speak the kind of words he spoke, clear and lucid and perceptive and penetrating, nor do they draw women and children to themselves, nor are they served by men with the intellect of Peter and John and Luke and Paul. Some say he was a religious fake, perpetrating a hoax like every other wouldbe savior. But fakes have a way of staying dead. Others say he was only a phantom but phantoms don't have flesh to crucify and blood to spill. And many have said he didn't exist at all. He's only a myth. But myths don't set the calendar for history. What child is this? Pilate called him the man without fault: Didero said he is the unsurpassed. Napoleon called him the emperor of love, Straus said he's the highest model of religion. John Stewart Mill called him the guide of humanity, Lecky said he's the highest pattern of virtue, Dicante said he's the holy one before God, Martino called him the divine flower of humanity. Renone said he's the greatest among the sons of men, Theodore Parker called him the youth with God in his heart. Francis Cobb said he's the regenerator of humanity. Robert Owen called him the irreproachable and the moderns say he,s superstar. What child is this? Thomas had it right. He looked at him and said, My Lord and My God.

The evidence that Jesus Christ is in fact God is overwhelming.

In John's Gospel, John begins by stating that very fact in verse 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Speaking more of Christ in verse 1? John said this.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And in verse 18 continued by saying, no man hath seen

God at any time; the only begotten Son, begotten in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. What child is this?

This is God in human flesh. And there is evidence in the Word of God, particularly in the gospel record of the life of Christ to prove it. For men are not asked to believe without evidence. Twofold witness to Jesus Christ is his knowledge and his deeds.

In the gospel of John his knowledge was overwhelming, Nathaniel was shocked that Jesus knew all about him before he ever met him, and Jesus...he said surely you must be the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. In John, chapter 7 after Jesus had said some things in the temple people believed on him and he didn't commit himself to them, why, because it says he knew what was in their hearts. He needed no man to tell him anything. He knew what was in the heart of a man. Astounding knowledge. In John, chapter 4 he met a woman at a well Sychar. A woman: whose life must have made the Sychar headlines. It was so sordid. And he told her everything about her, never having met her. She was so shocked she said, this is not the Christ, is it? Later on Peter was trying to tell the Lord that he loved him and his life didn't bear it out and so the very issue was under suspect and so finally Peter appealed to omniscience and he said, Jesus you know everything. You know I love you. His knowledge was absolutely astounding. He knew what only God knows. Thus he was God. But not only his knowledge his works. He said if you can't believe Me for what I say, believe me for the very works sake. He came to a wedding in Cana and he created wine. Only God can do that.

He came to a man by a pool and he created new organs. He came to a blind man and he gave him eyes. He came to a man who couldn't hear and he recreated his ears. He came to a man who couldn't .

walk and he recreated his limbs. He was God. He came to a multitude on a hillside and he created fish and bread for enough to feed perhaps 20,000. He came to a grave and said Lazarus come out...four days dead, everything was reversed and he walked out of the grave, his skin as fresh as a baby's, he was alive.

It's not only his words, but it's his works, that tell us that he's God. What child is this? This is God in human flesh.

But there's an area I think of the gospel of John that just completely thrills me in presenting who this Christ is and it's made up of the claims that he made for himself, under the category of the I am's.

He repeatedly said I am and then he said something else. And I want us to look at these this morning, if you have your Bibles, turn to begin with to John 6. We'll not have time to consider all of them, but some of them. First of all Jesus said I am the bread of life. Now you know if you know the Old Testament that I am is the name of God. Cod said my name is I Am that I Am. Jesus repeated that

many times by saying I Am. And here he says I Am the bread of life. In verse 35 of John 6 comes that classic statement, Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. Now as we look at these "I ams" we're going to be able to see who this child is. Let's go back to verse 26 so we understand what's going on. Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, or truly truly, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. He says you're crass, you're mundane, you're earthy, the day before he had spent an entire day doing miracles, from morning to nightfall he had done creative acts. He had healed the sick, he had interspersed with the miracles taught them, at the close of the day he had fed them by creating fish and bread and they followed them and the next day they met him and he said to them, you didn't follow me because of the miracles, you followed me because you want free food. Materialistic, crass. Mundane. You ate the loaves and you were filled and you're after more. Jesus came to offer something beyond physical food.

Jesus didn't come to be the breadman. Jesus didn't come to run a restaurant. Or to even start a welfare agency. He had something much more significant in mind. But they couldn't see past their stomachs. They followed him for that reason. Verse 27. Follow the narrative. Jesus says, don't work for the food which perishes, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life. Now he must be talking about something other than physical food because everybody eats physical food but everybody dies. What kind of food leads to eternal life? Which the Son of Man shall give unto you...he says, I'm here to give you food that will give you eternal life if you will...soul food. And I'm just the one to give it to you for him hath God the Father sealed. Sealed means approved.

Put the stamp of approval on. I'm the one whom God has approved of to dispense to you food for your soul. Verse 28. They still don't understand who he's talking about. Then said they unto him. What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? How do we get it? But notice how they frame the statement. What shall we do that we might work the works of God. That has got to be the height of egotism. What ever makes you think you can do anything to do the works of God. You can't do the works of God. But you see, they were in a works, righteousness system. That you do so many little things and God approves and you've all of a sudden slid across the line and you're into his category. That your goodies outweigh your badies. What shall we do to work the works of God.

No man ever did anything to gain God. It can't be done. Think of the story I told you some weeks ago about the evangelist in the days of the tent evangelism. He was closing up his tent after the meeting, he was outside and he did the whole thing, preached and then took down the tent. He was outside pulling up the pegs putting the tent down and a fellow came up and said...I know I missed the meeting but what do I have to do to get saved? And the evangelist turned to him and said, it's too late. He said, you mean it's too late, the meeting's over? He said, no it's too late, it's already all been done. There's nothing for you to do.

And then he told him all he had to do was believe. They said: What do we have to do to do the works of God. Listen to it, verse 29, Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. There's a lot of people running around in this world trying to gain God. Jesus said, I'll tell you what to do. Don't do anything. Just believe.

On him that God sent. Now he hasn't quite said yet who this is.

But he certainly implied that it's himself. And they get the message. And he's made a fantastic claim, because he said, this is the work of God, believe on him whom he has sent. Back in verse 27 he said...he calls himself the Son of Man sent from God and so they get the message. They know what's he's talking about...himself. He's saying, I'm the one who gives you spiritual soul food, all you have to do is believe on me and that's a pretty astounding claim. And like everybody, they want proof. I mean for you to just walk up to us and say you believe on me and you'll have spiritual food is pretty far out. Prove it. Which of course is ridiculous and it always indicates the character of unbelief.

Because they had had enough miracles, but unbelief never has enough. That's why Jesus never built his kingdom on the basis of miracles because you could never give enough miracles to unbelief. He gave so many thousands of miracles and even in the early churches we've been seeing in Acts they were repeated again and again but the unbelief is still unbelief. So they say prove it and the day before he had done hundreds of miracles. Now they bring out an interesting comparison. They figure he's going to say didn't you see me feed you yesterday, what more proof do you want. So they already beat him to the punch on that one. Verse 30.

Listen. They stood there for...what sign showest thou then, that me may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Do a trick so we can believe you. Something really super. In the back of their minds they're thinking, maybe this time we'll get steak. Verse 31 they do a little comparison...listen to it. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert...now don't do that deal about...you know...

food in the wilderness yesterday...I mean that's old stuff. Do an original thing. Moses pulled that one. Our fathers got free food in the wilderness. It says, as it is written he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Now what they're really saying is this.

If you're who you claim to be you ought to be able to do greater things than Moses. Right? If you're who you claim to be, you ought to do better than Moses, you provided food on one day for 1520 thousand people. Moses provided Manna every day for 40 years for maybe 2 million people. Can you top that? Now that's the implication of what they're saying. Now only that, Moses just brought it down from heaven, you just took it from what you had.

How do we know you're the one that's sent. Then came Jesus! reply.

Beautiful. Verse 3?. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, that this...Moses gave you not that bread from heaven...Moses didn't have anything to do with it. He just stood around and collected it like everyone else. But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of Cod is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Now.

Now this is really getting heavy. He's talking about some kind of spiritual bread. And he sweeps aside that analogy with just an easy sweep and he gives them four corrections. Number one.

It wasn't Moses who gave you the manna from heaven, it was God.

In Deuteronomy 16:?, I think it is, the text says, then the Lord said unto Moses, I will rain bread from heaven for you. Moses had nothing to do with it. In fact, Moses got so hungry to be connected to a miracle that one time he hit the rock when he should have spoken to the rock, just so it would look like he was doing some of it. He wasn't doing any of it. God was doing it. Moses only directed the manner of collection and only because God told him what to tell them. So it wasn't Moses that gave you the manna, it was God. Number two. It was only manna. It wasn't true bread.

I've come to give you true bread. I mean, let&s face it. The manna was only a type of the real bread. So what I did was far better than what was there. I mean, that was only sort of a celestial angel food cake. What I'm going to give you is the real stuff. Soul food. Third thing that he corrects about their little analogy is that Moses' bread gave only physical nourishment but true bread gives spiritual life. Verse 33 says this bread gives life. You know that that manna in the wilderness didn't give life? That whole generation did what? Died. You say, well manna didn't really have much to it. It just kind of lasted one day and it didn't do a thing for you spiritually. No it didn't it didn't give life. But whoever eats the true bread, lives.

Verse 5?. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal what? Life. Now that's some kind of different bread. Manna had no power to conquer death. The whole generation that ate it died. The fourth thing that he said to sweep aside their argument is that manna was for Israel, true bread for the world, the end of verse 33, gives life to the world. Manna fell in Israel's camp, true bread falls over the world. So Christ sweeps aside their petty little analogy, and he says, I'm' talking about true bread that feeds the soul. But they're so blind to spiritual reality.

This is the tragedy. Then in verse 3? they say, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And I'm not sure they knew what they were asking for. You've been saying you've got it. You've been saying you came from Cod to bring it, give it to us. Jesus said unto them I am the bread of life. Fantastic claim. Absolutely fantastic.

Then he says this. Here's how to get it. He that...what's the next word?...cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. You know what Jesus requires for a man to take of that bread? Come and what? Believe. If you're hungry crawl up to the table and believe. That's all. You don't have to do anything other than that. Come, believe. I am the bread of life and faith takes you. Your hungry heart needs only one food and that food is Jesus. He satisfies me, does he satisfy you?

Remember the prodigal son? He left home. Why did he leave home?

He wanted life. He really wanted the world's menu. He bailed out of that deal, collected his part of the money, took off to live it up and eat the world's goodies. You know what? He wound up eating pig slop. Remember? He was there in the sty eating slop one day and he said, this is ridiculous. Go<? thinking.

He said, my father is loaded. I'm not eating any more pig slop.

He swallowed his pride and took off for his father's house. His father ran out to meet him. Somebody said the weather must have been icy because he fell on his neck and kissed him. But anyway, he ran out to meet him, took him in the house and remember what happened? They killed the fatted calf and they gave him a banquet.

He traded in the pig slop of the world for what was available in the father's house. You know something? There's only one place you'll ever be satisfied. That's in the Father's house. He's got everything you could ever want to eat. You don't need any of the world's fare. And I'll tell you this. Whenever men have found the gnawing hunger of their heart satisfied it's been when they've eaten it in the Father's house. Because there and there alone can you find the bread of life. That child is this? This is the bread of life. If you eat of him you'll never hunger again.

Secondly this is the living water, chapter 7, verse 37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Oh, what a fantastic statement. You know, earlier in John, chapter 4 He met that woman at the well and he said this water you keep drinking doesn't really last. You get thirsty again, don't you?

He said, I have some water I'd like to give you, if you drink of this you will what? Never thirst again. This is living water and then he went on to say, I am the living water. And here he repeated the same thing but I want you to see it in this context and I think it's so exciting. Notice that the word cried out in the greek that's *acrosden* and it means that he yelled it at the top of his voice. Jesus literally yelled at the top of his lungs as loud as he could, if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. Just yelled it. You say, well, what's he doing that for?

I mean, isn't it a little out of context...at the well we understand it right? ?because they're talking about water and it's a well.

But what's he doing here at the last day of the feast in the temple yelling that. ?ell, he had a very good reason. Jesus was always the master of every moment. He took every single moment and every single situation and turned it around for his own good. That's classically God. He does that all the time. Let's find out what ?as going on. It says at the beginning of 37 and watch this...

in the last day, that great day of the feast...now that tells us ?hen it was. The time was the Feast of the Tabernacle. You remember that the Feast of Tabernacles was to commemorate the wilderness wandering of Israel. They had wandered for ?0 years in the wilderness after they'd come out of Egypt before they entered the Promised Land. They had lived in tents for all those ?0 years and they always had this feast every year to commemorate that wandering and to thank God for preserving them, for feeding them, ?or providing water and all of this kind of thing. And for leading them with the cloud and the pillar. So it ?as a great feast of Tabernacle. And it had two dominate ceremonies that kind of...just kind of overruled all the others and we'll look at both of those. The first one fits here. The worshipers first of all according to Leviticus ?3: ?O everybody got the fruit of goodly trees or branches of palm trees or boughs of thick trees or willows of the brook and they all held them over their heads and formed kind of a mock tent or tabernacle as a commemoration and they paraded around with all of this...they all marched to the ceremony at the temple when the Pharisees called for it. They did this every day during the festival. They would come to the temple a' they would form this kind of tent. At the same time that all of this was being done the priest would appear with a pitcher in his hand. The pitcher would hold about ? pints according to the Jewish tradition. The priest would then take the empty pitcher, go to the pool of Siloam and scoop water until he filled the pitcher. He would then with a gilled pitcher and all these people following him walk back through the watergate into Jerusalem and as he came in everybody would be reciting Isaiah 12:3 which says with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. The word salvation is literally the word Jesus. So they come marching in and they're saying gloriously we're rejoicing about drawing water out of the wells of salvation so it's a very beautiful ceremony. Here they come. They finally arrive at the temple...all these masses of people,..thousands of people and the priest comes to the altar and he pours the water.

While this is being done the Levites choir accompanied by flutes begins to sing the Hallel which is Psalm 113-118 praising God and there's a wonderful glorious ceremony going on. And the whole ceremony was to celebrate how God provided water and manna in the wilderness. It was a commemoration. And on the very last day the thing just climaxed..the mass of people had grown and how they were all there and it wa? at the moment on the last day the great day of the feast I believe that the moment that that priest walked in there and began to pour that water that Jesus in the midst o?

that multitude stood up and shouted at the top of his voice these words. If any man thirsts, let him come unto me* and drink. See, he was the master of the moment. And you can imagine he let the whole nation of Israel create his sermon for him and he just added the invitation. What child is this? The living water. It's a thirsty world we live in, did you know that? Men are on the desert dying for a drink. Jesus offered them water. Water once taken in never thirst again. And so Jesus turned the dramatic moment to himself. Notice verse 37 three things. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, and here's the gospel, if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. Three words. Thirst, come and drink. That's all God asks.

Number one is that you be thirsty, you have a need in your life?

Have you recognized the empty place? Do you know that there's something missing? Are you thirsty? For reality? Are you scrambling around in a world that is a desert? Your throat spiritually parched? God says good. You're thirsty. You need forgiveness, hope, love, joy, salvation, heaven, freedom from guilt, clear conscience. If you're thirsty let him what? Come. That's the second thing. Come. Approach. You see, when you say what does it mean to come to Christ, it means to do with your will and your heart, what you do with your feet if you were on the desert and a guy was over there with a glass of water. Go to him. Third thing.

Drink. A lot of people come but they never drink. Doesn't do you a bit of good to be thirsty and have it in your hand. You've got to get it inside. Drink, drink. Appropriate. A poet said it this way. I heard the voice of Jesus say behold I freely give living water thirsty one. Stoop down and drink and live. I came to Jesus and I drank of that lifegiving stream, my thirst was quenched. My soul revived and now I live in him. What child is this? The living water. Thirdly the light of the world. John 8.

This is a dark world we live in. We all know it. The strange miscarriage of justice, the compulsion to sin, the intangible commodity...peace that everybody reaches for and never gets.

The blank bitterness of staring into the face of death, the impenetrable darkness of the future. The dimness that shrouds the greatest truths. It's a dark world. Morally it's pitch black.

And in the midst of this world there's light. The sky that night was lit up with a light that the real light was in a manger. Look at verse 20 and let's see this. And just for a little note to help us understand, verse 20 says these words spoke Jesus in the treasury as he taught in the temple. Stop right there. That sets the scene.

The temple was a very interesting place. The whole life of Israel revolved around it. There were several courtyards. The outer court was the court where gentiles could go. One step further in was the court of the women. The court of the women was where the women could go obviously, but also was

the place where the treasury was kept.

In from there the men could go to make the sacrifices etc. But this is the second court in and it was very large. And around the walls were 13 trumpet shaped treasury boxes. They had an opening at the top and then a narrowing and then a large area in the bottom that contained what was put in. And each of the 13 trumpets was set aside for specific allotted taxes or offerings. For example there was the half shekel tax that everybody had to pay that I think went into three trumpets, there was a tax...an offering I should say that women had to give after childbirth called the offering for purification. There were other things and each of those trumpet shaped treasury boxes or chests were to be used to drop the offerings in. So it was a busy place. Paying taxes, providing offerings, all the hustle and bustle going on in this place called the court of the women, the temple treasury. Now it was right in that place that Jesus speaks. Now go back to verse 12 and here's what he says. Then spoke Jesus again unto them saying I am the light of the world. Now you say, that's interesting but what's he saying that there for? Doesn't he like to adapt? Why doesn't he say I am the true treasure. That would have been good.

I like that. He may have said that some other time. But he didn't say it this time. He said I am the light of the world. Why did he say that? Well, that was claimed for him before, John, chapter 1. Light has come into the world that men love darkness, Jesus said. But in John 1 it says that he's the light that lighteth every man.

Jesus had claimed to be light, John had claimed it for him. In I John 1:5 the Bible says this then is the message which we have heard of him and declare unto you that God is light and in him is no darkness at all and when Jesus said I am the light of the world he was claiming to be God. The Old Testament Psalmist said the Lord is light and Jesus is saying I am the one hoped for by the Old Testament psalmist. Why this? Why this Jesus? Why did you say that? ?we're back to the feast of tabernacles. It just ended.

?chapter. 7. ?e saw the last day. And you know the second dominating feature of the feast of tabernacles was the ceremony known as the illumination of the temple. This was an evening ritual that commemorated the light that led Israel. Remember they had the light at night and the light in the day, the pillar and the cloud that led them and they followed the light and they commemorated that in this fantastic ceremony. ?hat they did was..and incidentally the articles that were used no question*gout it, were still there.

Just days after. In fact it's possible that they could even have remained. But those great articles that were used in the illumination of the temple still standing there would suggest what Jesus said.

Let me show you what I mean. In the middle of the court of women, that very court where Jesus was, they put up a giant candelabra Then every night during the feast of the tabernacle they lit candles that

absolutely just filled the temple with light and the top of course was open so the light just came out of the top of the temple it was like some great diamond just nestled in the city of Jerusalem and light just coming out of the top. And that was every night. And the city was full of noisy singing and dancing and celebrating as they were remembering how God had directed them by the shekinah glory in the wilderness. And I can clearly visualize Jesus standing in the middle of that place with that candelabra now extinguished walking over to that thing and saying I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. Now when you hear him say it it means something, doesn't it. He says, you've been celebrating a light that led you around in the wilderness. You've been really excited about a bunch of candles lighting up the city of Jerusalem but I am the light of the world. Now that is the most egotistical statement imaginable or it is the statement of a mental patient or it is true. And he says he that followeth me...did you know that Jesus isn't a light to be looked at? He's a light to be followed. A lot of people look at him. Oh, every Christian they get that little card...oh...nice little Jesus on the little card, see. Jesus is not a light to be looked at. He's a light to be followed. The children of Israel had stared at the shekinah glory they never would have gotten going. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life. I'm a spiritual life. True life. So beautifully again Jesus captures the crowd with a stunning dramatic use of the scene. Every man who stumbles around in the mental darkness of ignorance who stumbles around in the moral darkness of sin, who stumbles around facing the inevitable darkness of hell has the promise of Jesus Christ that if he just follows him he'll have light forever. Follow Him. Like a soldier follows his commander. Like a pupil follows his teacher. Follow Him. Follow Me and walk in light. You know it's a wonderful thing to realize that we who know Jesus Christ don't live in the darkness.

Paul says we're children of the day. The lights are on. I understand things. I know what this world is all about. I know why I'm here, what I'm to do and I know where I'm going. And I understand truth because the Bible says thy word is truth. And God has placed within me the Spirit of God to teach me the Word. That's light. If you're living in darkness...what child is this? The star shown in the Eastern sky, this is the light of the world. John 10. I am the good shepherd. Verse 11. I love this. What child is this? Listen to him. I am the good shepherd, don't you like that? That's so good. You know, the idea of bread and the idea of water and the idea of light kind of the ideas of coming to Christ...just salvation believing in and coming to Christ. But here's the idea of his care for us. You know something. I'm excited that my faith in Christ is personal. I'm (well, let's see now, we've got a religion and we need to work this religion out...let's see...seven million of you over there and let's see...you four billion over here and we'll organize...here's the religion...God is not manipulating numbers. God is involved with individuals. And I'm glad that Jesus is seen as a good shepherd. That is doesn't say I am the great administrator. No, I am the good shepherd.

I like that a lot better, don't you? I don't want a great administrator I want a good shepherd. This is talking about his care. You know the life of...we've glamorized the shepherd...you know...lovely little fields and nice little white clothes and happy little lambs and all of this card of thing on a little card, you know. We really overdo it. And I think the whole Christmas scene is a little bit misunderstood...likg

the little kid you know who painted the picture with the big round blob in the corner and somebody said, what's that and he said that's round yon virgin. But anyway I think we kind of foul up the whole scene. But anyway, you might not understand that. I'm not sure I do, but anyway...I don't think we always understand that the life of a Palestinian shepherd wasn't easy. It was very hard. It was extremely difficult. There was sparse grazing area, there was very precipitous terrain, sheep were easily lost, fall over the edge of the plateau that runs in Israel. A shepherd had a lot of work to do. There were wild animals, thieves, robbers. It was not easy. It was not glamorous. But there's several things that we learn about a shepherd that the Scripture emphasizes that I think help us to see how Jesus was a good shepherd. Number one. The shepherd cared for his sheep. He had to be very personally involved to be a good shepherd, and you know every night when the sheep would come back into the fold the shepherd would stand at the door and the Old Testament talks about passing under the rod. It talks about thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. And what that means in Psalm 23 when it talks about it is that when the sheep would come into the fold the shepherd would drop his rod over the entrance and he would stop the sheep there and he would only let one pass at a time and as the shepherd would hold his rod the sheep would come to the rod and he would check every sheep for any injuries or hurts or cuts that he might want to bandage or soothe with oil and then he would lift the rod and let one through at a time and stop the next one, so that he became personally involved in caring for every one. That's what the Psalmist meant when he said thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

And so the sheep came through one by one and he grew to love each one and care for each one and take care of its hurts and injuries.

So the shepherd cared for his sheep. Look at verse 7 of chapter 10. It's so beautiful. Then said Jesus unto them, verily, verily I say unto you* I am the door of the sheep. You say, well how can you be the shepherd and the door? Well, the shepherd was the door.

You see, in every sheepfold there wasn't a door. Then the sheep were out on the hillside and in the warm season, they didn't return clear to the village at night to go into the large fold there that was kept by the porter. They would go into a little fold that had been put up on the hillside. It was just a little ring and it had just an opening for a door. And all the sheep would go in and then the shepherd himself would lie down across the opening and go to sleep. He was the door. You know what that is beloved, that's security. Once you're in God's fold, Jesus Christ is the door that keeps you there. He became the very door. He never entrusted the security of the sheep to anybody but himself. And every believer is secure on the basis of the care of Jesus Christ himself.

And over in chapter 10, verse 7, my sheep hear my voice, I know?

them, they follow me, I give them eternal life, they shall never perish neither shall any pluck them out of my hands. We're secure in him. He cares for us. Not only does he care for the sheep but the food

shepherd leads the sheep. I had one occasion when n? uncle took me out to the desert one time to run around with some sheep in the desert and I learned a little bit about it, that you don't herd them around, you lead them. And then I used to work in high school at a pig ranch in El Monte and we had thousands?...what a way to work your way through high school, right? But I did and it's different with hogs than it is with sheep for a lot of reasons.

One of them...I'm not going to go into all of them, but one of them is that you don't lead pigs. You get this long rod that's got electric potency and you come behind them and at about 5 miles an hour, see, and you just start really giving them a shot and then they go. You have to drive them from the back you see. Same with cattle. Sheep...you're the shepherd. You just get out in front and they follow. They follow you. Isn't it a wonderful thing to realize that Jesus isn't herding us all over the place but that everywhere we ever go he's been there? Everything we ever go through he's already been there because we're following him. It's fabulous. He's not shoving us into things and giving orders from the rear. He's in front. He's already made the way, cleared the path, and says follow. The only time you get messed up is when you step off the path that he cleared. Then you are in trouble.

That's when you get into the thorns and thistles and then it hurts.

And so the good shepherd leads his sheep. Every step you'll ever take in your life, Christian, Jesus has already been there, if you're following him. And the sheep don't follow a stranger. They follow him. The third thing I see in this is that the shepherd loves his sheep. Look at verse 1?. I'm the good shepherd and know ?y sheep. You can substitute the word love for know. I told you many times the word love is used interchangeably...the word know is used interchangeably with a deep love. ?we've seen it in the Old Testament...I know Israel, God says, which means that I love them. Cain knew his wife and she bore a child which means the intimacy of love. Know and love are the same so many times in Scripture. And here let's just substitute the word love. I'm the good shepherd and love my sheep and am loved of mine as the Father loves n?, even so love I the Father. Isn't that exciting that we're all tangled up in a love relationship with the Trinity?? The shepherd ...I'm so glad he loves me personally. I don't understand it, but he does. The good shepherd cares for his sheep, leads his sheep and loves his sheep. And the shepherd in Palestine was the same way. He became attached to those sheep so that if one was lost he'd spend a night trying to find that one sheep. And you know when you live your life alone out there as a shepherd and the only friends you have are sheep they become meaningful to you. The last thing about the good shepherd is that he dies for the sheep. Verse 11 I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. You say, a guy would do that...a guy would die for a bunch of sheep? He's nuts. They did. In Palestine the shepherd was absolutely responsible for the sheep, he herded and cared for the sheep that were really owned by another man in most cases. In Amos chapter 3, verse 12 I found an interesting verse that speaks about a shepherd who tried to get ahold of some legs and a piece of an ear out of a lion's mouth to prove that the sheep had really been eaten by a lion and that he hadn't himself killed the sheep or he hadn't been negligent. In fact the law says in Exodus 22:13 if he be torn to pieces then let him bring it

for a witness.

If something happened to the sheep you had to bring in the remains to prove that it was not your own fault. That was to prevent any would be shepherd from taking over a flock and running away with it. Or killing them. Dr. W. M. Thomison in a book *The Land Of The Book* says, and I quote, "I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with savage beasts and when the thief and the robber came the faithful shepherd has often put his life in his hand to defend the flock. I have known more than one case where he literally had to lay it down in the contest. gives an illustration. A poor faithful fellow last spring between Tiberias and Taber instead of fleeing actually fought three Bedouin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their conjars and died among the sheep he was defending. There's something significant about somebody who would do that.

And Jesus was the good shepherd and you know, he gave his life for his sheep? He was born to die. Practically speaking, on a human basis when the shepherd dies, the sheep are finished. There are defenseless. And that's not true with Jesus Christ because he was the good shepherd, he was annexed the resurrection and the life. Sure, he died and for three days the sheep were scattered.

Zechariah said smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered and they were, but only three days. Three days later he came out of the grave and gathered his flock. He is the resurrection and the life, chapter 11, verse 25. Jesus arrived at the home of Mary and Martha where Lazarus had died, Jesus said in verse 25, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. He says, I am the resurrection and the life. And death couldn't hold him. E. B. Hardy says in his little book *COUNTDOWN* that men really only need to answer two questions. number one, has anyone ever cheated death? And Hardy says, I looked around the world and I checked out the graves of Mohammed and Buddha and they are still occupied. And then I checked Jesus, and it's empty, and then I studied the evidence and I found that he did rise from the dead and I said, good, that's question number one. question number two is did he make a way for me to cheat death. And then I read his words and this is what he said, because I live, "atf Ye shall live also. And that's the one I put my faith in. What child is this? That child is this who stood by Lazarus four days dead and said Lazarus, come out.

And Lazarus did. That child is this who went into the grave and three days later burst out himself? This is the resurrection and the life. You say, how can I have that life that he provides.

Simple. Verse 26 at the end says this. Believeth thou this. Works, no. Faith. And I love this. She saith unto him, Yea Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world. That's all. That's all he asks.

?In t child is this? The resurrection and the life. John 1?:6, I just elude to it. Listen. Jesus saith unto him I am the way the truth and the life...no man cometh unto the Father, what...but by me. ??at child is this? The way, the truth: the life.

Before man fell in the garden he had three things. Communion with God, he walked and talked with God. The knowledge of God. He knew God and God alone. The life of God. He had life. Then he fell. Three things happened. Bang. He lost communion with God. What's the first thing he did. He hid. Communion was over. Fellowship was finished. The second thing he lost was the pure knowledge of God. Now he knew good and evil and his mind was messed up. He got what Paul calls a reprobate mind. Third thing he lost was life. And the day that you shall eat, you shall surely die. Every man born to the world since then has been born without fellowship with God, without the pure knowledge of God and without life. And Jesus entered into the world and said this.

I am the way back to fellowship with God, I am the knowledge about God...the truth, I am the life of God restored to man. He is everything that man lost in the fall. What child is this? Let's pray. We think of the words Father of Simeon who picking up the baby Jesus in the temple and cradling him in his arms and looking into the little face and knowing it was Messiah said to Mary these words...this child is set for the rising and the falling of many.

And Simeon had it right God. He knew that Jesus was the crux of human history. Many rise or fall according to what they do with Jesus Christ. We think of Pilate when he was approached by the leaders they said don't put I am the King of the Jews, put he said I am the King of the Jews and Pilate said, what I've written, I've written. Father this child is the King and we know it. And we 'What Child Is This?u who laid think of the writer of the song, to rest on Mary's lap asleep, whom angels guard with anthems sweet while shepherd's watch are keeping. This is Christ the King whom shepherds guard and angels sing. Haste, haste to bring him praise, the babe, the Son of Mary. Oh Father, we know who he is. Bread for the hungry, water for the thirsty, light for the darkened, good shepherd for the lost sheep, resurrection and life for the dead. The way, the truth and the life for those separated from thee. God we ask that no one would leave this place this morning not knowing Christ. That Christmas is a mockery, Christmas is nothing. Jesus' life was wasted unless he is born in them. God move upon the hearts of those who have never received Christ by faith. Speak to those who are trying to earn salvation by works.

Show them that it's only a matter of coming and believing. This we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

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