

John 10:19-42 and 11:1-8

Jesus had a real way of using everyday events to teach great spiritual truths.

And nowhere was this more evident than in the parable of the sheepfold.

Yes, the very nature of the Israeli sheepfold lent itself to the truths Jesus wanted to convey.

As you will remember, it is a single enclosure housing several flocks that belonged to several shepherds.

That was exactly the situation in Israel when their Messiah arrived.

Jesus had come through the *door of prophecy*, but many of the sheep remained loyal to their false shepherds.

It was then that Jesus took on His role as the Good Shepherd.

John 10:16 **"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."**

These **"other sheep,"** that is, other than His Jewish sheep, would come from the Gentile nations.

And the **"one fold, and one shepherd"** He spoke of was the Church of Jesus Christ, those who had availed themselves of the one door into heaven.

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Summarizing then, we have three sheepfolds: Sheepfold No. 1 --- the nation of Israel. Sheepfold No. 2 --- that much larger sheepfold containing the Gentile nations.

And sheepfold No. 3 --- heaven itself, the home of the Old Testament saints, and the bride of Christ.

Yes, from the Day of Pentecost unto this present hour, there had been three, not two, sheepfolds on the earth, and they are all mentioned in 1 Corinthians 10:32 **"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:"**

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When Jesus finished this parable, there was a murmuring in the crowd.

John 10:19-21 **"There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.**

20: And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21: Others said, These are not the

words of him that hath a devil. Can a
devil open the eyes of the blind?"

"He hath a devil, and is mad" --- In view of
the wisdom and the riches contained in
this parable, it is hard to imagine
such a reaction.

However, this was nothing new.

Even before Jesus began to speak in
parables, He had been consistently
maligned and misunderstood.

And we should expect no better.

Jesus said --- **"It is enough for the
disciple that he be as his master, and
the servant as his lord."**

Yes, He is our example, and our consolation.

Hebrews 12:3 **"For consider him that endured
such contradiction of sinners against
himself, lest ye be wearied and faint
in your minds."**

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And now the scene changes --- John 10:22

"And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter."

Unlike the Feast of Tabernacles, in which attendance at Jerusalem was compulsory, this feast could be celebrated in synagogues and homes throughout the land.

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Let's take a few minutes to discover the origin of this feast.

In a very dark period of Jewish history, Israel found itself under the very repressive rule of a man by the name of Antiochus The Fourth.

Not only had he abolished the Jewish religion, but he had replaced it with the worship of his own Greek gods.

And to add insult to injury, he desecrated the temple of God, and actually sacrificed a pig on the altar.

As you might have guessed, there was a rebellion that lasted for three years.

Finally, Judah Maccabee and his followers regained the temple, purged it, and dedicated a new altar.

Each year after that, the Jews remembered this glorious event by celebrating the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah.

This eight-day celebration is also called the Festival of Lights.

That name stems from the belief that the menorah, or seven-branched candelabra, which could only be supplied with enough oil for one day, burned throughout the entire *eight* days of the celebration.

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John 10:23-24 **"And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.**

24: Then came the Jews round about him."

Apparently His disciples were not with Him at the time.

In fact, He might have been quite alone as He walked in Solomon's porch.

Suddenly, He found Himself surrounded by the Jews --- **"How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."**

Were they genuinely interested in His claims?

I don't think so.

Jesus had already walked through the *door of prophecy*, but they had refused to acknowledge Him.

They had also ignored His miracles, God's personal testimony, and the words of John the Baptist.

Now they had the audacity to demand "--- **If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.**"

Well, He had told the Samaritan woman plainly, and He had told the blind man plainly, but He had no intention of telling them plainly.

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There are several reasons for this, and we have already talked about some of them. First of all, Israel had been given four witnesses: John the Baptist, Jesus' miracles, God's personal testimony, and the Scriptures.

It was a privilege no other nation had been given.

And Jesus would not go beyond God's
appointed witnesses.

And now there was another reason why Jesus
wouldn't tell them plainly.

Their willing ignorance had resulted in
judicial blindness.

Yes, Jesus had already begun to talk in
parables that they could not
understand.

And there might have been a third reason for
Jesus' reaction.

I think they had a hidden agenda behind this
request.

They were looking for a definite statement
that they could use against Him.

Yes, they wanted some piece of hard evidence
that would bring down the wrath of the
Romans upon Him.

If they could only get Him to actually say
He was Israel's King, they would have
what they needed.

Everyone was aware of the fact that Rome was
always on the lookout for an
insurrection and anyone who would lead
one.

Why, even at the time of Jesus' birth, King
Herod had slaughtered all the babies in
Bethlehem to eliminate any possibility
of a rival.

So, in my opinion, the Jews had come up with
a new idea.

They had tried to stone Jesus, but some
supernatural power had always
intervened.

Their only hope now was to portray Him as a
political enemy.

And it would prove to be an effective strategy, and one that would tip the balance when Jesus stood before Pilate --- **"If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."**

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No, they weren't seeking the truth at all, and Jesus knew it.

And He also knew them --- **"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."**

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V 25-26 **"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.**

26: But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."

No, Jesus wouldn't be trapped in their little web.

He simply pointed them to His mighty works. If they had been His sheep, that would have been enough to convince them.

V 27-31 **"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:**

28: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29: My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30: I and my Father are one.

31: Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him."

The last time they did that, Jesus had simply walked away, **"going through the midst of them, and so passed by."**

But this time, as they stood there with hatred on their faces and rocks in their hands, Jesus stood His ground and demanded that they state their charge **"--- Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?"**

They certainly had a lot to choose from. Jesus had literally filled Israel with His good works.

He had healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and even raised the dead.

And in the case of the lepers, the Jews had been obliged to verify His mighty works.

You see, Old Testament law required a leper
be tested by a priest before he could
return to society.

No, there was no denying His mighty works.

So **"--- for which of those works do ye stone
me?"**

It should have stopped them in their tracks,
but it didn't.

V 33 **"The Jews answered him, saying, For a
good work we stone thee not; but for
blasphemy; and because that thou, being
a man, makest thyself God."**

Did you notice the words --- **"that thou,
being a man ---"**

In spite of all the evidence to the
contrary, they still looked upon Jesus
as an ordinary man.

That was their fatal flaw.

And Jesus had warned them about that **"--- if
ye believe not that I am he, ye shall
die in your sins."**

It is a cardinal truth upon which our
eternal destiny depends.

If Jesus is only a man, then He can only die
for His own sins, not ours.

And if He is God, and only God, then He
can't die at all.

However, if Jesus is the God-man, then He
can be the sinless Passover Lamb ---
**"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the
sin of the world."**

Yes, it is an essential truth, and it is the
main theme of the book we are studying
---**"and the Word was with God, and the
Word was God."**

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However, it would be a truth that the Jews would stubbornly deny to their dying day ---"For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

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V 34-36 "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?"

35: If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36: Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

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I'm sure they knew exactly what Jesus was talking about, but perhaps many of us do not.

So, we better spend some time looking into the background of Jesus' remarks.

Here's the bottom line.

God always meant Israel to be a theocracy. By that, I mean Israel was to be ruled by God.

Of course, God didn't literally sit on a throne in Israel, but He ruled through His personal representatives.

They were called the judges, and were the final authority in Israel.

However, as Israel drifted further and further away from God, they wanted a king like the other nations round about them.

Reluctantly, God gave them a king, but He continued to guide their affairs through their judges and magistrates. And surprisingly, He gave these representatives His own name.

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Actually, God had setup this system long before Israel was a settled nation. When they were slaves in Egypt, God gave them His own representative, and He did it in a most unusual way.

Ex. 7:1 **"And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet."**

Even though the word *god* is in small letters, it actually translates *Elohim*. Yes, God actually made Moses a small Elohim, or His personal representative.

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And there's something else here that I find rather amusing.

Do you remember what Moses' excuse was for not going?

He said *I'm not an eloquent speaker.*

So, not only did God make him as a small-letter god, but he gave him his own prophet to speak for him!

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Getting back to the nation of Israel ---

As I mentioned, even when Israel was ruled by a king, God maintained judges and magistrates as His representatives to judge the people.

And to give them the proper authority, He literally made them small-letter gods, or Elohims.

And He commanded Israel to respect this authority.

Exodus 22:28 **"Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."**

However, as is always the case with man, not all of the judges lived up to this high honour.

And God didn't take that shortcoming lightly.

In fact, Psalm 82 is all about God's judgment on those unjust judges.

It begins with the words, **"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods,"** and ends with the words of condemnation, **"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High."**

7: But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

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And even in New Testament times, this principle of honouring governmental authorities is still in force.

At least it is in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Romans 13:1 **"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."**

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So, that was the basis of Jesus' argument when He said in John 10:35-38, **"If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;**

36: Say ye of him, whom the Father hath

sanctified, and sent into the world,
Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am
the Son of God?

37: If I do not the works of my Father,
believe me not.

38: But if I do, though ye believe not
me, believe the works: that ye may
know, and believe, that the Father is
in me, and I in him."

Yes, His mighty works were always the proof
of His authenticity.

We have just read about the sharp criticism
He received concerning His parable.

They said, "**He hath a devil, and is mad,**"
but the more reasonable among them
said, "**These are not the words of him
that hath a devil. Can a devil open the
eyes of the blind?**"

And you might also remember the time when
the blind man was being examined by the
Pharisees.

They came to the erroneous conclusion that
Jesus couldn't be from God because He
made clay on the Sabbath.

Once again, the more reasonable among them
said, **"How can a man that is a sinner
do such miracles?"**

And certainly Nicodemus had gotten the
point, --- **"Rabbi, we know that thou
art a teacher come from God: for no man
can do these miracles that thou doest,
except God be with him."**

And these Jews should have arrived at the
same conclusion --- **"If I do not the
works of my Father, believe me not.
38: But if I do, though ye believe not
me, believe the works: that ye may**

**know, and believe, that the Father is
in me, and I in him."**

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So, as they stood there with rocks in their
hands, Jesus faced them down with the
truth.

But they were beyond all sense of justice,
or any appeal to reason.

V 39-40 **"Therefore they sought again to take
him: but he escaped out of their hand,
40: And went away again beyond Jordan
into the place where John at first
baptized; and there he abode."**

He had given them another chance, and now He
was gone.

He must continue to call out His sheep.

V 41-42 **"And many resorted unto him, and
said, John did no miracle: but all
things that John spake of this man were**

true.

42: And many believed on him there."

Isn't it nice to know that John's work lived on after him?

Even though he had been executed, his testimony was still assisting his Shepherd to gather the sheep.

And you know what? You have no idea how God will continue to bless your labours, even after you have left this mortal scene.

Revelation 14:13 says "--- **"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."**

So take courage my friend. The results are not all in yet.

We have no idea how God might multiply our works.

The Sunday School teacher who has planted God's Word into the hearts of the children has no idea what those children will become, even after he or she has gone home to glory.

The seed that you planted in your neighbour's heart may not sprout until later.

We can only *plant*, but the Lord "**giveth the increase.**"

The stock markets go up and down, and God has called all we can accumulate "**uncertain riches.**"

However, the Lord's work is the best long-term investment you can ever make.

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John 11:1-3 "Now a certain man was sick,
named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of
Mary and her sister Martha.

2: (It was that Mary which anointed the
Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet
with her hair, whose brother Lazarus
was sick.)

3: Therefore his sisters sent unto him,
saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou
lovest is sick."

As far as the disciples were concerned, this
was a ticklish situation.

Jesus left Jerusalem after they had tried to
stone Him, and was now "**beyond Jordan -
--.**"

And not only were they in a much safer
place, but Jesus was getting a
tremendous response.

Yes, it was a win-win situation.

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On the other hand, Bethany was only "**about fifteen furlongs**" or approximately two miles from Jerusalem.

Of course, they all knew Lazarus and his sisters were Jesus' personal friends. And no doubt they had all stayed at their home many times on their way to Jerusalem.

And certainly they sympathized with this painful situation, but it was just too dangerous to even think about.

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I'm sure we will all agree that we shouldn't take advantage of our friends. However, if you find yourself in deep water, literally, it's always nice to have a friend who is a plumber.

Well, Mary and Martha just happened to have
a dear friend Who could heal people.
So when their brother got really sick, they
dialled 911.

V 3-4 "--- **Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest
is sick.**

**4: When Jesus heard that, he said, This
sickness is not unto death, but for the
glory of God, that the Son of God might
be glorified thereby."**

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A few lessons back, we talked about
adversity.

It's not always a bad thing.

Certainly, in Lazarus' case it wasn't a good
thing to experience. In fact, it was
downright horrible.

However, because of this time of great
tribulation, a miracle would emerge

that would prove once and for all that
Jesus really was God in the flesh.

Yes, tribulation is not always a bad thing.

Remember what Jesus said about the blind

man's affliction --- **"Neither hath this
man sinned, nor his parents: but that
the works of God should be made
manifest in him."**

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John 11:5-6 **"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her
sister, and Lazarus.**

**6: When he had heard therefore that he
was sick, he abode two days still in
the same place where he was."**

If Jesus loved them so much, why didn't He
rush to their aid?

Why did Lazarus have to go through the pain
of death while Jesus lingered?

Certainly, Jesus' disciples had no problem
with His decision.

It just made good sense.

Oh, there's no doubt they cared about his
suffering, but they also knew it would
pass.

Hadn't Jesus said, --- **"This sickness is not
unto death."**

Well, yes, He had said that, but He had said
much more than that.

What He had actually said was **"This sickness
is not unto death, but for the glory of
God, that the Son of God might be
glorified thereby."**

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And then, when the disciples thought
everything was settled, Jesus said "---
Let us go into Judaea again."

V 8 **"His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?"**

If Lazarus wasn't going to die, why should they take such a risk?

And even if Jesus wanted to relieve his suffering, hadn't He been able to heal the nobleman's son when He was 12 to 15 miles away?

In fact, He had insisted on doing it from that distance.

But this time, Jesus was determined to go.

V 9-10 **"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.**

10: But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."

Certainly, Jesus could have healed Lazarus from any distance, but that really wasn't the point.

No, He must wait, and He must be misunderstood, not by His enemies, who were always misjudging Him, but by His friends.

And last, but not least, His good friend Lazarus must suffer the pain of death.

Yes, the glory of God was contingent upon Jesus' absolute attention to His Father's timetable.

For, you see, it wasn't Lazarus' sickness, or even his death that would glorify God. It was his resurrection!

This is getting interesting, isn't it?

But we must stop right here.

Like Jesus, we must wait.

Not for a mere two days, but until next
week.