

The Good Shepherd; John 10:14-15

I. Shepherds

- A. The idea of a shepherd as a religious leader is one of the constants of Scripture
 1. Moses started out as an Egyptian leader
 - a) Acts 7:22 (ESV); And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.
 - b) But that was not enough for God — Moses had to be a shepherd for 40 years before God met him on Mount Horeb and gave him his purpose
 2. Jacob started out as a shepherd — and required more shepherding before God established him and changed his name to Israel
 - a) Genesis 25:27 (ESV); When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents.
 - b) Genesis 4:20 (ESV); Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.
 3. David was a shepherd who protected his flock from bears and lions
 - a) He uses his shepherding skills as a selling point to Saul to confront Goliath
 - b) 1 Samuel 17:34–35 (ESV); ³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.
- B. Shepherds were not looked upon favorably
 1. “Literal shepherds were not highly esteemed in Graeco-Roman literature. Aristotle speaks negatively of the shepherd when he writes that among men, “the laziest are shepherds, who lead an idle life, and get their subsistence without trouble from tame animals; their flocks wandering from place to place in search of pasture, they are compelled to follow them, cultivating a sort of living farm” ¹
 2. Genesis 46:34 (ESV); you shall say, ‘Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,’ in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.”
- C. Ezekiel 34:1–3 (ESV); ¹ The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep.
- D. Jesus uses this analogy to claim his Leadership — His divinity — fulfilling the old testament prophecy in Ezekiel
- E. Ezekiel 34:15–16 (ESV); ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

II. Duties ²

- A. ‘The duties of a shepherd in an unenclosed country like Palestine were very onerous.
 1. “In early morning he led forth the flock from the fold, marching at its head to the spot where they were to be pastured.

¹ Matthew Montonini, “Shepherd,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

² M. G. Easton, *Easton’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

2. Here he watched them all day, taking care that none of the sheep strayed, and if any for a time eluded his watch and wandered away from the rest, seeking diligently till he found and brought it back.
 3. In those lands sheep require to be supplied regularly with water, and the shepherd for this purpose has to guide them either to some running stream or to wells dug in the wilderness and furnished with troughs.
 4. At night he brought the flock home to the fold, counting them as they passed under the rod at the door to assure himself that none were missing.
 5. Nor did his labours always end with sunset. Often he had to guard the fold through the dark hours from the attack of wild beasts, or the wily attempts of the prowling thief'
- B. Sustained vigilance — a shepherd was constantly looking over the flock
1. In the morning to make sure all of them left the enclosure for pasture
 2. In the afternoon to make sure all of them were led to water — and to ensure none wandered away from the flock
 3. In the evening to make sure all returned through the gate into the enclosure
 4. At night to make sure they were safe from predators
- C. Provider
1. A shepherd was tasked with providing green pastures for the sheep to graze
 2. He was tasked with providing still waters for the sheep to drink
 3. He was tasked with providing a place to rest safe from their enemies
- D. Tools ³
1. A Rod — “The rod is a club that the shepherd has carved from the root of a tree and fitted to his hand. The shepherd keeps the rod with him at all times and uses it as a weapon. When wild animals or snakes threaten the sheep, the shepherd takes aim and uses the rod to kill or drive off the intruder.”
 2. A staff — “Many staffs had hooks at the end for catching sheep that were wandering off, for lifting a lamb and putting it back beside its mother, and for pulling away thorny bushes the sheep might wander into and get caught in. Sheep fall over cliffs and have to be rescued. They get into weeds that will make them sick if they eat them. They must have a shepherd with them at all times to care for them and guide them. The shepherd uses his staff to assist the sheep. Sometimes he uses it to pull a sheep close to himself so he can inspect it for cuts and bruises.”
- III. The Good Shepherd
- A. Jesus takes on all these responsibilities when He claims to be the Good Shepherd
- B. John 10:11–15 (ESV); ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
1. Sometimes we feel the hook of the staff steering us back onto the right path
 2. Sometimes we feel the rod as it defends us from Satan and his temptations
 3. Sometimes we feel the staff as it pulls us closer to Jesus
- C. Knowing all these things about the shepherd of the 1st century really makes Psalm 23 mean a whole lot more
- D. Psalm 23
- IV. We Are The Sheep
- A. Will you submit to the Good Shepherd?
 - B. Will you allow Him to lead you in and out?

³ Cowman, L.B. “BibleGateway.” Leviticus 19:11 NIV - - Bible Gateway, Bible Gateway Blog, 22 Feb. 2014, www.biblegateway.com/devotionals/streams-in-the-desert-for-kids/2014/02/22.

- C. Will you allow Him to protect and provide for you
- D. Psalm 95:6–7a (ESV); ⁶ Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.