

A.W. Pink:

Exposition of the Gospel of John

CHAPTER 34

CHRIST, THE DOOR

John 10:1-10.

Below is an Analysis of the passage which is to be before us:—

1. Entrance into the Sheepfold: lawful and unlawful: verses 1, 2.
2. The Shepherd admitted by the porter: verse 3.
3. The Shepherd leading His sheep out of the fold: verses 3, 4.
4. The attitude of the sheep toward strangers: verse 5.
5. Christ's proverb not understood: verse 6.
6. The true Shepherd and the false shepherds contrasted: verses 7-9.
7. Antichrist and Christ contrasted: verse 10.

As a personal aid to the study of this passage the writer drew up a list of questions, of which the following are samples: To whom is our Lord speaking? What was the immediate occasion of His address? Why does He make reference to a "sheepfold?" What is meant by "climbing up some other way" into it? What is signified by "the door?" What "sheepfold" is here in view?—note it is one into which thieves and robbers could climb; it was one entered by the shepherd; it was one out of which the shepherd led his sheep. Who does "the porter" bring before us? Such questions enable us to focalize our thoughts and approach this section with some degree of definiteness.

Our passage begins with "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The antecedent of the you is found in "the Pharisees" of the previous chapter. The occasion of this word from Christ was the excommunication of the beggar by the Pharisees (John 9:34). The mention of "the sheepfold" at once views these Pharisees in a pastoral relationship. The reference to "thieves and robbers" climbing up some other way denounced the Pharisees as False shepherds, and rebuked them for their unlawful conduct. In the course of this "parable" or "proverb," the Lord contrasts Himself from the Pharisees as the true Shepherd. These things are clear on the surface, and the confusion of some of the commentators can only be attributed to their failure to attend to these simple details.

There are two chief reasons why many have experienced difficulty in apprehending the Lord's teaching in this passage: failure to consider the circumstances under which it was delivered, and failure to distinguish between the three "doors" here spoken of—there is the "door into the sheepfold" (verse 1); the "door of the sheep" (verse 7); and the "door" of salvation (verse 9). In the previous chapter we find our Lord had given sight to one born blind. This aroused the jealousy of the Pharisees, so that when the beggar faithfully confessed it was Jesus who had opened his eyes, they cast him out of the synagogue. When Christ heard of this He at once sought him out, and revealed Himself as the Son of God. This drew forth the confession, "Lord, I believe." Thus did he evidence himself to be one of "the sheep," responding to the Shepherd's voice. Following this, our Lord announced, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). Some of the Pharisees heard Him, and asked, "Are we blind also?" To which the Savior replied, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." It was the self-confidence and self-complacency of these Pharisees which proved them to be blind, and therefore in their sins. Unto them, under these circumstances, did Christ deliver this memorable and searching proverb of the shepherd and his sheep.

It will probably be of some help to the reader if we describe briefly the character of the "sheepfold" which obtains in Eastern lands. In Palestine, which in the pastoral sections was infested with wild beasts, there was in each village a large sheepfold, which was the common property of the native farmers. This sheepfold was protected by a wall some ten or twelve feet high. When night fell, a number of different shepherds would lead their flocks up to the door of the fold, through which they passed, leaving them in the care of the porter, while they went home or sought lodging. At the door, the porter lay on guard through the night, ready to protect the sheep against thieves and robbers, or against wild animals which might scale the walls. In the morning the different shepherds returned. The porter would allow each one to enter through the door, calling by name the sheep which belonged to his flock. The sheep would respond to his voice, and he would lead them out to pasture. In the lesson before us this is what the Lord uses as a figure or proverb.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep" (John 10:1, 2). The "sheepfold" here is not Heaven, for thieves and robbers do not climb up into it. Nor is it "The Church" as some have strangely supposed, for the Shepherd does not lead His sheep out of that, as He does

from this fold (see verse 3). No, the "sheepfold" is manifestly Judaism—**in which some of God's elect were then to be found**—and the contrast pointed in these opening verses between the true Shepherd and the false ones, between Christ and the Pharisees. The "door" here must not be confused with "the Door" of verse 9. Here in verse 1 it is simply contrasted from the "climbing up some other way." It signifies, then, the lawful "way" of entrance for the Shepherd, to those of His sheep then to be found in Judaism.

"But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." The simple meaning of this is, that Christ presented Himself to Israel in a lawful manner, that is, in strict accord with the Holy Scriptures. "He submitted Himself to all the conditions established by Him who built the house. Christ answered to all that was written of the Messiah, and took the path of God's will in presenting Himself to the people" (Mr. Darby). He had been born of a virgin, of the covenant people, of the Judaic stock, in the royal city—Bethlehem. He had conformed to everything which God required of an Israelite. He had been "born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). He was circumcised the eighth day (Luke 2:21), and subsequently, at the purification of His mother, He was presented to God in the Temple (Luke 2:22).

"To him the porter openeth" (John 10:3). The word "porter" signifies door-keeper. The only other time the word occurs in John's Gospel is in John 18:16, 17, and how strikingly these two references illustrate, once more, the law of contrast! "But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door (the porter), and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not." In John 10 the "porter" refers, ultimately, to the Holy Spirit, while the door-keeper in John 18 is a woman that evidently had no sympathy with Christ. In John 10 the porter opens the door to give the Shepherd access to the sheep, whereas in John 18 the door is opened that a sheep might gain access to the Shepherd. In John 10 the sheep run to the Shepherd, but in John 18 the sheep is seen in the midst of wolves. In John 10 the sheep follow the Shepherd: in John 18 one of the sheep denies the Shepherd!

"To him the porter openeth." The "porter" was the one who vouched for the shepherd and presented him to the sheep. As to the identity of the "porter" in this proverb there can be no doubt. The direct reference was to John the Baptist who "prepared the way of the Lord." He it was who formally introduced the Shepherd to Israel: "that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing" (John 1:31), was his own confession. But, in the wider application, the "porter" here represented the Holy Spirit, who officially vouched for the credentials of the Messiah, and who now presents the Savior to each of God's elect.

"To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3). Three things mark the genuine shepherd: first, he entered the fold by "the door," and climbed not over the walls, as thieves and robbers did. Second, he entered the door by "the porter" opening to him. Third, he proved himself, by "the sheep" recognizing and responding to his voice. Mark, then, how fully and perfectly these three requirements were met by Christ in His relation to Israel, thus evidencing Him to be the true Shepherd.

As we have seen, the "door" was the legitimate and appointed entrance into the fold, and this figure meant that the Messiah came by the road which Old Testament prophecy had marked out beforehand. The "porter" presented the shepherd to the sheep. Not only had the prophets borne witness to Christ, but, in addition, when He appeared, a forerunner heralded Him, introducing Him to the people. Besides this, when the true Shepherd of Israel was manifested, the sheep recognized His voice. The true sheep were known to Him, for He called them by name. The call was to follow Him, and to follow Him was to take their place with the despised and rejected One outside of Judaism. How beautifully this links up with what was before us in John 9 it is not difficult to perceive.

In John 9 Christ had shown how that He had entered the door into the sheepfold, for He had come working the works of God (John 9:4), and had thus shown Himself to be in the confidence of the Owner of the fold, and therefore the approved Shepherd of the flock. The Pharisees, on the contrary, were resisting Him and attacking the sheep; therefore they must needs be "thieves and robbers." The blind beggar was a sample of the flock, for refusing to listen to the voice of strangers, he, nevertheless, knew the voice of the Shepherd, and drawn to Him, he found salvation, security, and sustenance.

All of this, strikingly illustrated in John 9, receives interpretation and amplification in chapter 10, where we have a blessed commentary on the condition of the excommunicated one. The Pharisees imagined they had cut him off from the place of safety and blessing, but the Lord had shown him that it was only then he had really entered the true place of blessing. Had he remained inside Judaism he would have been the constant object of the assaults of the "thieves and robbers"; but now he was in the care of the true Shepherd, the good Shepherd, who instead of killing him, would die for him! It is beautiful to compare John 10:3 with 9:34. The Pharisees' "casting out" of the poor beggar was, in reality, the Shepherd leading him out from the barren wilderness of Judaism to the green pastures of Christianity. Thus are we given to see the Lord Himself behind the human instruments—a marvellous example is this of how God oftentimes employs even His enemies to accomplish a good turn for His people.

"To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." Mark carefully the qualification here: it is not He calleth the sheep by name, but "he calleth his own

sheep by name." His "own sheep" were those who had been given to Him by the Father from all eternity; and when He calls, all of these "sheep" must come to Him, for it is written, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37). These "sheep," then, were the elect of God among Israel. Not to the Nation at large was Christ's real ministry; rather did He come unto "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That these "lost sheep" were not coextensive with the whole Nation is clear from the twenty-sixth verse of this chapter, for there we find the Shepherd saying to unbelieving Israelites, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." The sheep, then, whom Christ "called" during the days of His earthly ministry were the elect of God, whom He led out of Judaism. This was strikingly foreshadowed of old. Moses, while estranged from Israel, kept the flock of his father in other pastures, near "the mount of God" (Ex. 3:1).

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4). Christ began His ministry inside the fold of Judaism, for it was there His Jewish sheep were to be found, though mixed with others: from these they needed to be separated when the true Shepherd appeared. Therefore does His voice sound, calling the lost sheep of the House of Israel unto Himself. As they responded, they were put forth outside the fold, to follow Him.

"And the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." Link this up with the third clause in the previous verse. "He calleth his own sheep by name . . . and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." A number of blessed illustrations of this are found scattered throughout the Gospels. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him" (Matthew 9:9). Here was a lone sheep of Christ. The Shepherd called him; he recognized His voice, and promptly followed Him.

"And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). Here was one of the sheep, called by name. The response was prompt, for we are told, "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully" (verse 6).

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me" (John 1:43). This shows us the Shepherd seeking His sheep before He called him.

John 11 supplies us with a still more striking example of the drawing power of the Shepherd's voice as He calleth His own sheep. There we read of Lazarus, in the grave; but when Christ calls His sheep by name—"Lazarus, come forth"—the sheep at once responded.

As a touching example of the sheep knowing His voice we refer the reader to John 20. Mary Magdalene visited the Savior's sepulcher in the early morning hour. She finds the stone rolled away, and the body of the Lord gone. Disconsolate, she stands there weeping. Suddenly she sees the Lord Jesus standing by her, and "knew not that it was Jesus." He speaks to her, but she supposed Him to be the gardener. A moment later she identified Him, and says, "Rabboni." What had happened in the interval? What enabled her to identify Him? Just one word from Him—"Mary"! The moment He called His sheep by name she "knew his voice"!

It has been thus with God's elect all down the ages. It is so today. There is a general "call" which goes forth to all who hear the Gospel, for "many are called," though few are chosen (Matthew 20:16). But to each of Christ's "sheep" there comes a particular, a special call. This call is inward and invincible, and therefore effectual. Proof of this is found in Romans 8:30 and many other scriptures: there we read, "Whom he called, them he also justified." But all are not justified, therefore all are not "called." Who then are "the called"? The previous clause of Romans 8:30 tells us—"Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." And who were the ones "predestinated"? They were those whom God did "foreknow" (John 8:29). And who were they? The previous verse makes answer—they who were "the called according to his purpose." Called not because of anything in them, foreseen or actual, but solely by His own sovereign will or purpose.

This effectual call from God is heard by each of the "sheep" because they are given "ears to hear": "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). This effectual call comes to none but the sheep; the "goats" hear it not—"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep" (John 10:26).

There is, no doubt, a secondary application of these verses to the under-shepherds of Christ today, and considered thus they supply us with several important principles which enable us to identify them with certainty. First, a true under-shepherd of Christ is one who gains access to the sheep in the Divinely-appointed way: unlike the Pharisees, he does not intrude himself into this sacred office, but is called to it by God. Second, he is, in the real meaning of the word, a shepherd of the sheep: he has their welfare at heart, and ever concerns himself with their interests. Third, to such an one "the porter openeth": the Holy Spirit sets before him an "open door" for ministry and service. Fourth, the sheep hear his voice: the elect of God recognize him as a Divinely appointed pastor. Fifth, he calleth his own sheep by name: that portion of the flock over which God has made him overseer, are known to him individually: with a true pastor's heart he seeks them out in the home and acquaints himself with them personally. Sixth, he "leadeth them out" into the green pastures of God's Word where they may find food and rest. Seventh, "he goeth before them": he sets before them a godly example, asking them to do nothing which he is not doing himself; he seeks to be "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). May the Lord in His grace increase the

number of such faithful undershepherds. Let the reader, especially the preacher, consult the following passages: Acts 20:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Peter 5:2-4.

"And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:5). This is very important, for it describes a mark found on all of Christ's sheep. A strange shepherd they will not heed. This can hardly mean that they will never respond to the call of the false shepherds, but that the redeemed of Christ will not absolutely, unreservedly, completely give themselves over to a false teacher. Instead, speaking characteristically, they will flee from such. It is not possible to deceive the elect (Matthew 24:24). Let a man of the world hear two preachers, one giving out the truth and the other error, and he can discern no difference between them. But it is far otherwise with a child of God. He may be but a babe in Christ, unskilled in theological controversies, but instinctively he will detect vital heresy as soon as he hears it. And why is this? Because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and has received an "unction" from the Holy One (1 John 2:20). How thankful we should be for this. How gracious of the Lord to have given us this capacity to separate the precious from the vile!

"This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them" (John 10:6). This points a contrast, bringing out as it does the very reverse of what was before us in the previous one. There we learn of the spirit of discernment possessed by all of Christ's sheep; here we see illustrated the solemn fact that those who are not His sheep are quite unable to understand the truth even when it is plainly presented to them. Blind indeed were these Pharisees, and therefore totally incapacitated to perceive our Lord's meaning. Equally blind are all the unsaved today. Well educated they may be, and theologically trained, but unless they are born again the Word of God is a sealed book to them.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). The "door of the sheep" is to be distinguished from the "door of the sheepfold" in verse 1. The latter was the Divinely-appointed way by which Christ had entered Judaism, in contrast from the false pastors of Israel whose conduct evidenced plainly that they had thrust themselves into office. The "door of the sheep" was Christ Himself, by which the elect of Israel passed out of Judaism. The Lord had not come to restore Judaism, but to lead out His own unto Himself. A striking illustration of this is to be found in Exodus 33. At the time viewed there Judaism was in a state of unbelief and rebellion against God. Accordingly, Moses, the shepherd of Israel, "took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp" (verse 7). Those who really sought the Lord had to leave "the camp," and go forth unto the shepherd on the outside. It is beautiful to note the sequel: "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses" (verse 9). God was with His shepherd on the outside of the camp! So here in John 10, Christ, the antitype of Moses (Deut. 18:18), tabernacles outside Judaism, and those whose hearts sought the Lord went forth unto Him. And history has repeated itself. God is no longer with the great organized systems of Christendom, and those of His people whose hearts cleave to Him must go forth "outside the camp" if they would commune with Him! The "door" here then speaks of exit, not entrance.

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them" (John 10:8). It is abundantly clear that here we have another instance in John's Gospel where the word "all" cannot be taken absolutely. The Lord had been speaking of shepherds, the shepherds of Israel; but not all of them had been "thieves and robbers." Moses, Joshua, David, the prophets, Nehemiah, and others who might be mentioned, certainly could not be included within this classification. The "all" here, as is usually the case in Scripture, must be restricted. But restricted to whom? Surely to the scribes and Pharisees, who were here being addressed by the Lord. Bishop Ryle has a helpful note on this verse: "Let it be noted," he says, "that these strong epithets show plainly that there are times when it is right to rebuke sharply. Flattering everybody, and complimenting all teachers who are zealous and earnest, without reference to their soundness in the faith, is not according to Scripture. Nothing seems so offensive to Christ as a false teacher of religion, a false prophet, or a false shepherd. Nothing ought to be so much dreaded in the Church, and if needful, be so plainly rebuked, opposed, and exposed. The strong language of our Reformers, when writing against Romish teachers, is often blamed more than it ought to be."

It is a notable fact that the severest denunciations which are to be found in the Scriptures are reserved for false teachers. Listen to these awful words of Christ: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel! . . . ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:14, 24, 33). So, too, His forerunner: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7). So, too, the apostle Paul: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13). So Peter: "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with the tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever" (2 Pet. 2:17). So Jude: "clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (verses 12, 13). Unspeakably solemn are these; would that their alarm might be sounded forth today, as a warning to those who

are so careless whose ministry they sit under.

But why should our Lord term the Pharisees "thieves and robbers"? Wherein lay the propriety of such appellations? We believe that light is thrown on this question by such a scripture as Luke 11:52: "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." With this should be compared the parallel passage in Matthew 23:13. The Pharisees were thieves inasmuch as they seized positions which they had no right to occupy, exerted an authority which did not justly belong to them, and unlawfully demanded a submission and subjection to which they could establish no valid claim.

What, may be asked, is the distinction between "thieves" and "robbers"? The word for "thief" is "kleptes" and is always so rendered. It has reference to one who uses stealth. The word for "robbers" is "lestes," and is wrongly translated "thief" in Matthew 21:13; Luke 10:30, 36, etc. It has reference to one who uses violence. The distinction between these two words is closely preserved all through the New Testament with the one exception of verse 10, where it seems as though the Lord uses the word "kleptes" to combine the two different thoughts, for there the "thief" is said not only to "steal," but also to "kill and destroy."

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). Notice carefully the broader terms which Christ uses here. No longer does He say, as in verse 7, "I am the door of the sheep," but "I am the door," and this He follows at once with, "If any man enter in, he shall be saved." Why this change of language? Because up to this point the Lord had been referring solely to elect Israelites, which He was leading out of Judaism. But now His heart reaches forth to the elect among the Gentiles, for not only was He "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers," but He also came "that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (Rom. 15:8, 9). The "door" in verse 1 was God's appointed way for the shepherd into Judaism. The "door" in verse 7 was the Way out of Judaism, by Christ leading God's elect in separation unto Himself. Here in verse 9 the "door" has to do with salvation, for elect Jew and Gentile alike.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." This is the "door" into the presence of God. By nature we are separated, yea, "alienated" from God. Sin as a barrier comes in between and bars us out of His holy presence. This is one of the first things a convicted soul is made conscious of. I am defiled and condemned, how can I draw near to God? I am made to realize my guilty distance from Him who is Light, how then can I be reconciled to Him? Then, from God's Word, I learn heaven's answer to these solemn questions. The Lord Jesus has bridged that awful gulf which separated me from God. He bridged it by taking my place and being made a curse in my stead. And as the exercised soul bows to God's sentence of condemnation, and receives by faith the marvelous provision which His grace has made, I, with all other believers, learn, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13).

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." This is one of the precious words of Christ which is well worthy of prolonged meditation. A "door" speaks of easy ingress and is contrasted from the high walls in which it is set. There are no difficult walls which have to be scaled before the anxious sinner can obtain access to God. No, Christ is the "door" into His presence. A "door" may also be contrasted from a long, dreary, circuitous passage—just one step, and those on the outside are now within. The soul that believes God's testimony to the truth of salvation by Christ alone, at once enters God's presence. But mark the definite article: "I am the door." There was only one door into the ark in which Noah and his family found shelter from the flood. There was only one door into the Tabernacle, which was Jehovah's dwelling-place. So there is only one "door" into the presence of the Father—"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And again, "I am the way," said Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Have you entered by this "door," dear reader? Remember that a door is not to be looked at and admired, but to be used! Nor do you need to knock: the Door is open, and open for "any man" who will enter. Soon, though, the Door will be shut (see Luke 13:25), for the present Day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2) will be followed by the great Day of wrath (Rev. 6:17). Enter then while there is time.

Such are some of the simplest thoughts suggested by the figure of "the door." What follows is an extract from an unknown writer who signed himself "J.B. Jr":—"The door suggests the thought of the dwelling-place to which it is the means of entrance. Within we find the possession or portion of those who can by right enter by the door. Thus it is as a place set apart for its possessors from all that which is outside. In this way we may say it is a sanctuary. These things are rightly connected with a door, it being the only right way of entrance."

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Notice Christ did not say, "I am the door: if any man enter in, he shall be saved," but, "by me if any man enter in." Man cannot enter of himself, for being by nature "dead in trespasses and sins" he is perfectly helpless. It is only by Divine aid, by the impartation to us of supernatural power, that any can enter in and be saved. Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). Writing to the Philippians the apostle said, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (John 1:29). Not only is it a fact that no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him (John 6:44), but it is also true that none can come to the Father except Christ empowers. This is very clear from the sixteenth verse of our chapter: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." The "sheep" enter through the Door into God's presence because Christ "brings" them.

Beautifully is this portrayed in Luke 15:5, 6: "And when he hath found it (the lost sheep), he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me."

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." To go "in and out" is a figurative way to express perfect freedom. This was something vastly different from the experiences of even saved Israelites under the law of Moses. One of the chief designs of the ceremonial law was to hedge Israelites around with ordinances which kept them separate from all other nations. But this was made an end of by Christ, for through His death the "middle wall of partition" was broken down. Thus were His sheep perfectly free to "go in and out." It is indeed striking to discover in Nehemiah 3 that of the ten gates referred to there, of the sheep gate only are no "locks and bars" mentioned. This chapter concerns the remnant after their captivity, and clearly fore-shadows in a wonderful way the truth here taught by Christ. "The fulness of this freedom is intercourse with other saints, and in deliverance from the yoke of the (ceremonial) laws (Acts 15:10), was only by degrees apprehended. That lesson, taught Peter on the housetop at Joppa (Acts 10), was the first real step in the realization of that freedom" (Mr. C. E. Stuart).

"And find pasture." This tells of the gracious provision made for the nourishment of the sheep. Our minds at once turn to that matchless Psalm which records the joyous testimony of the saints: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green, pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." The "pastures," then, speak not only of food, but of rest as well. This too is a part of that wondrous portion which is ours in Christ. A beautiful type of this is found in Numbers 10:33: "And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them." All through the Old Testament the "ark of the covenant" is a lovely figure of the Savior Himself, and here it is seen seeking out a resting place—the pastures—for Israel of old.

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Seven things are enumerated in this precious verse. First, "I am the door": Christ the only Way to God. Second "By me if any man enter": Christ the Imparter of power to enter. Third, "If any man enter": Christ the Savior for Jew and Gentile alike. Fourth, "If any man enter in": Christ appropriated by a single act of faith. Fifth, "he shall be saved": Christ the Deliverer from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Sixth, "he shall go in and out": Christ the Emancipator from all bondage. Seventh, "and find pasture": Christ the Sustainer of His people.

Finally, it is blessed to see how the contents of this precious verse present Christ to us as the Fulfiller of the prophetic prayer of Moses: "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:15-17).

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10). It will be observed that Christ here uses the singular number. In verse 8 He had spoken of "thieves and robbers" when referring to all who had come before Him; but here in verse 10 He has some particular individual in view—"the thief." It should also be noted that in speaking of this particular "thief" our Lord combines in one the two distinct characters of thieves and robbers. As intimated in our comments on verse 8 the distinctive thought associated with the former is that of stealth; that of the latter, is violence. Here "the thief" cometh to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. Who then is the Lord referring to? Surely it is to the last false shepherd of Israel, the "idol shepherd," the antichrist, of whom it is written, "For lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened" (Zech. 11:16).

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Why say this after having already declared that "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"? Mark this follows His reference to "the thief." Here then our Lord seems to be looking forward to the Day of His second advent, as it relates to Israel. This indeed will be the time when abundant life will be theirs. As we read in Romans 11:15, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" In striking accord with this it should be noted that the Lord's title "I am the door" (verse 9) is the third of His "I am" titles in this Gospel—the number which speaks of resurrection. Immediately following we find Christ saying here I am the good Shepherd" (verse 11). This is the fourth of His "I am" titles—the number of the earth.

As preparation for the next chapter let the interested student ponder carefully the following points:—

1. Study the typical "shepherds" of the Old Testament.
2. Precisely what is the meaning of "for" in verse 11?
3. Did the Shepherd give His life for any besides "the sheep"?
4. What other adjectives besides "good" are applied to Christ as the "Shepherd"?
5. Who is referred to by "a hireling" (verse 12)?

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6. Who are the "other sheep" of verse 16?

7. Look up proofs in the Gospels of the first part of verse 18.