

Protection from Evil

Key Verse: *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."*
—John 10:11

Selected Scripture:
John 10:1-18

TO THE AGRARIAN PEOPLES

of ancient times, those of the flock and field, Jesus' remarks struck a responsive chord. The shepherd was a familiar sight to them. He stayed with his flock both day and night, led the flock to fresh pastures each morning, and carefully, tenderly watched over each member during the day. He ensured that all were safely within the sheepfold when evening came. (John 10:3,4) Equipped with a curved staff for guiding the sheep, a rod was used as a weapon, and a sling, and he was prepared to defend the flock against predators such as bears or lions; to give his life, if need be, to protect those in his charge. (vss. 11-13) Yet he willingly left the "ninety and nine" to go out into the wilderness, seeking the one that was lost. (Luke 15:4-6) The shepherd was an honored figure.

The symbolism of the good shepherd is not without parallel among the Lord's people today who find great comfort in the fact that they have a loving Lord, a trusted guide on whom they can rely for protection in the midst of an evil and perverted world. He is a sympathetic elder brother and master, who is our great High Priest, having passed into "the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." (Heb. 4:14-16) We are further instructed to "hold fast the profession of our faith" (chap. 10:23), for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses;

but one who in every respect has been “tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (chap. 4:15) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive “mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—vs. 16

In the Key Verse, our Lord points to his near approaching death, to the laying down of his life for the sheep. There was but one way to become the true Shepherd. That way was the way of the cross, to give himself a ransom for all. By this great sacrifice, he demonstrated his devotion to his office by the sacrifice of everything, even life itself, on behalf of those who trusted in him, his beloved sheep.

No matter how many others might claim to be the shepherd, he declared himself to be the only true one, and he would prove his loyalty and love by the sacrifice of his life for them.

Our Lord’s death not only satisfied the law by providing the ransom, but it also opened the sheepfold, which gave him, the true Shepherd, the privilege of granting his beloved access to the Father.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. 53:6) Jesus bore the penalty of your sins and mine that we might no longer roam as sheep having no shepherd. How beautifully is this redemption pictured in Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep. “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.”—Matt. 18:11-14 ■