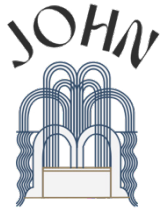


An Exposition of the
GOSPEL OF JOHN



“The Validation of the Messiah”

John 10:1-6

Theme: Jesus is validated as the Messiah by God’s Word, His ministry, and God’s people.

Introduction: The imagery of a flock of sheep is one of the analogies God uses in describing His people. In the ancient world, sheep did not survive without a shepherd—they were vulnerable, undiscerning, and entirely dependent. That is precisely why Scripture repeatedly uses this motif: it exposes our dependence on the shepherd. Perhaps one of the most well-known passages in the Old Testament is Psalm 23, in which Yahweh, the Messiah, is portrayed as the true Shepherd. Yet, there are those who would seek to supplant the Lord as the “good shepherd” and appoint themselves as the one the sheep ought to follow. This also emphasizes the dangers of following false shepherds and the necessity of the true Shepherd. A true shepherd is not self-appointed, not careless, and not unknown to the flock. He comes the right way, is recognized by the one guarding the sheep, knows his sheep intimately, and leads them with clarity and purpose.

By the time we arrive in John 10, the tension is already high. The religious leaders of Israel have proven themselves to be blind guides—self-appointed shepherds who neither enter rightly nor care for the flock faithfully. They have just cast out a man whom Jesus healed (John 9), demonstrating that they neither recognize the work of God nor love the people of God. Against that backdrop, Jesus speaks—not merely to contrast Himself with false shepherds—but to validate Himself as the true Messiah.

[READ TEXT]

This passage is not sentimental; it is judicial. Jesus is, in effect, presenting evidence. He is establishing His credentials. He is answering the critical question: Who has the right to shepherd the people of God? And He does so using a familiar image, but with unmistakable authority. Listen to His words:

“He who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens...” (John 10:2–3).

Jesus is not climbing over walls like a thief. He is not sneaking in illegitimately. He comes through the proper entrance, according to divine protocol. He is recognized by the gatekeeper. He knows His sheep by name. He leads them, and they follow—not by coercion, but because they know His voice.

What unfolds in these verses is a comprehensive validation of Jesus as the Messiah:

- I. **He Is Admitted through Divine Protocols**— vv. 1-2: *He fulfills the requirements set forth by God.*
- II. **He Is Acknowledged by the Protector** — v. 3a: *God Himself testifies to Him.*
- III. **He Is Attentive to His Purpose** — vv. 3b-4a: *He calls, gathers, and leads His sheep.*
- IV. **He Is Accepted by His People** — vv. 4b-6: *Those who belong to Him hear and follow.*

This is the dividing line: false shepherds are self-validated; the true Shepherd is God-validated—and His sheep unmistakably respond.

So, the question is not merely, Is Jesus a shepherd? The question is, “Is He *the* Shepherd?” In our text today, **Jesus is validated as the Messiah by God’s Word, His ministry, and God’s people.** Your answer to the question of whether Jesus is your personal shepherd determines everything.

Let’s look at this in our text ...

I. **He Is Admitted through Protocols – 10:1-2**

A. **The Illegitimacy of Leadership that Disregards God’s Word – v. 1**

1. The previous chapter ended with a denunciation of the Pharisees as remaining in an unreconciled condition before the Lord – cp. **9:41**.
2. Jesus continues His response to these hypocrites by providing several litmus tests for who can legitimately provide spiritual leadership to the people of God.
3. He begins with a description of those who are unfit and illegitimate – *“Truly, truly, I say to you he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.”*
4. Shepherds would bring their sheep to a *“fold”* for safekeeping at night, mingling them with the sheep of other shepherds under the watchful care of a doorkeeper who maintained limited access to the animals on behalf of the shepherds.
5. In this context, the analogy Christ is making is that the *“fold of the sheep”* refers to the nation of Israel, which has been cared for by the prophets over the centuries as they waited for the shepherd to come and claim them.
6. Jesus states that those who refuse to recognize the authority of the prophets and try to reach the sheep without their guidance are illegitimate.
7. In the current situation—regarding the Pharisees who expelled the former blind man for responding in faith to the Lord Jesus by saying that He was “of God”—the Pharisees were deliberately ignoring the authority of the Scriptures’ testimony concerning the Messiah and were *“climbing up some other way”*—the way of their own laws and regulations.
8. The Pharisees refused to come to Christ and sought to enter the sheepfold through their own “door.” – cp. **John 10:9**.
 - a) *They were insisting on their own “works-based” righteousness.*
 - b) *They were rejecting the Lord through whom all must come.*
9. Jesus describes their motivation and conduct as illegitimate: *“He is a thief and a robber.”*

B. **The Legitimacy of Leadership that Regards God’s Word – v. 2**

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1. In contrast to the deceit and dishonesty of the religious hypocrites, Jesus indicates that the true Messiah is *“he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.”*
2. Thus, He describes Himself who perfectly fulfills all the prophecies concerning the Messiah.
3. He presented Himself in a lawful manner, that is, in strict accord with the Scriptures.
4. Thus, instead of ignoring the Scriptures, Christ Jesus operated completely under the law— cp. ***Galatians 4:4; 1 Peter 2:22.***
5. Thus, the first test of the legitimacy of the Messiah is how He presents Himself to the people of God, according to the Scriptures or according to the fabrications and priorities of men.

II. He Is Acknowledged by the Protector – 10:3a

A. The Priority of the Protector

1. If the thieves and robbers refer to the hypocritical religious leadership, and the shepherd refers to the Messiah, and the sheepfold refers to Israel, then the doorkeeper must refer to those commissioned by God to watch over the people of God – the prophets.
2. Throughout the ages, God had attempted to protect His people by means of godly men who would confront those who would attempt to lead Israel away from God
3. They would, during confronting false teaching, describe the glories of the Messiah – the Shepherd who would one day come and deliver them.
4. Providing access to the people of God to the true shepherd of the sheep was something that the prophets intensely anticipated as they described the messianic hope.
5. The greatest accomplishment of the doorkeeper was to protect the sheep until such a time as the shepherds arrived to gather them – *“to him the doorkeeper opens.”*
6. Such ones would do all they could to hand the sheep over unharmed and ready for their shepherd.

B. The Personification of the Protector

1. In the immediate situation, the *“doorkeeper”* being referred to is the culmination of all the “doorkeepers” throughout the history of Israel – the greatest prophet who ever lived – John the Baptist – ***Matthew 11:7-11.***

2. His entire ministry was to prepare the way of the Lord by gathering the people of God together – the remnant of those who were looking for the Messianic hope – and opening the door of the fold to the Messiah – cp. ***John 1:30-31***.
3. It was the testimony of John the Baptist that brought to Jesus His first believing followers and should have opened to Him the hearts of the whole people – ***John 1:6-7***.

III. **He Is Attentive to His Purpose – 10:3b-4a**

A. **His Interest in the Sheep**

1. Once the doorkeeper opens the door to the shepherd, the next test of authenticity is the shepherd's agenda.
2. We find that one of the observations the doorkeeper can make is to watch the interaction between the sheep and the shepherd.
3. First, ***“the sheep hear his voice”*** – do the people of God pay attention to the voice of the shepherd?
4. However, not only is it true that the sheep will hear the voice of their shepherd, but there is also personal and intimate attention given to the sheep by the shepherd – ***“and he calls his own sheep by name.”*** – cp. ***Isaiah 43:1***.
 - a) *The call of Matthew – cp. ***Matthew 9:9***.*
 - b) *The resurrection of Lazarus – ***John 11:43***.*
 - c) *The revelation to Mary – ***John 20:16***.*
5. In this era, the shepherd would enter the fold and begin calling his sheep, who would gather around him one by one. This is how Jesus came into the world—to gather those He would save.

B. **The Intention for the Sheep**

1. His purpose in gathering this large flock is clear - ***“... and leads them out.”***
2. This would involve removing them from the deadness of the religious system called Judaism and guiding them into a genuine reconciliation with God.
3. He wants to lead them to a place of nourishment and rest – a vast pasture where they can feed and be at peace.
 - a) *He desires to take them from their spiritual blindness, false belief system, and bondage to self-righteousness – ***1 Peter 2:9***.*
 - b) *He desires to take them to true salvation, spiritual life, safety, and*

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blessing.

4. Notice that *“he puts forth his own, [and] goes before them”* – not driving them but leading them, and they willingly follow.

IV. He Is Accepted by His People – 10:4b-6

A. The Disposition to Follow the Shepherd – vv. 4b-5

1. The sheep don't need to be driven – they can trust the shepherd's leadership and willingly follow him.
2. We are told that *“the sheep follow him because they know his voice,”* – a reference to being familiar with the shepherd and having confidence in Him.
3. They understand that he will only act in their best interest – and look forward to the blessings that come from trusting him – cp. **Psalm 23**.
4. However, they will in no way follow those with whom they are not familiar – *“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”*
5. Additionally, those who do not know Him will not respond to His voice when He calls—just like the Pharisees who were so hostile toward Him.

B. The Display of Foolishness by the Sinners – v. 6

1. We are told that this analogy completely escapes these people and that they cannot understand what He is saying.
2. In their foolishness, they remain spiritually dark, not hearing the voice of the Great Shepherd. *“This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.”*
3. They were truly spiritually blind, even as Jesus said – cp. **9:41**.

So What?

1. When you feel unseen or uncertain, how does this passage call you to rest in His faithful oversight?
2. What competing voices are shaping your decisions, priorities, and affections more than Christ's voice?
3. In what current circumstance is Christ calling you to trust His leading, even when the path is unclear?

Theme: Jesus is validated as the Messiah by God's Word, His ministry, and God's people.