

“Completely Known, Completely Loved”

(John 10:11-18)

Introduction

- As part of this year’s Summer Sermon Series (“Sing to the Lord”), we have chosen a specific worship songs to serve as the biblical theme for our sermons. Throughout this summer, we have selected various songs ranging from very old [“Be Thou My Vision” (published in 10th or 11th century, and translated into English in 1912, and “Whate’er My God Ordains is Right” (published in 1675, and translated into English in 1863)] to relatively new [“Praise the Lord” (2020), and “I Set My Hope on Jesus” (2023)]. The song I have chosen for this morning’s message is very new. It was written by Matt Boswell and Matt Papa last year, and it is wonderfully titled “Completely Known, Completely Loved.”

Completely known, completely loved / My heart is seen by God above
Should I now run? Dare hide my face? / When in His eyes there is only grace

Completely free, the shame is gone / The highest Judge took all my wrongs
And set them on His only Son / He bore my sin, I bear His love

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

Completely His, how can it be? / That God would set His heart on me
Loved not for works that I have done / But long before time had begun

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

Completely saved, the work is done / The curse, the grave, is overcome
For with that dawn there rose a King! / Now heaven’s smile shines over me

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

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- Upon hearing this song, my mind immediately drawn to the tenth chapter of John’s Gospel and specifically to the passage where Jesus declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd. Unlike the “synoptic Gospels” (synoptic meaning “seeing together”) of Matthew, Mark, and Luke – which similarly chronicled the life and ministry of Christ, the Gospel of (the apostle) John is more thematic (while also chronological). John sought to prove that Jesus is the one and only Son of God. and one and only Savior from God.

John 20:30-31 ~ “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

To accomplish this, John intentionally highlighted “seven miracles” that Christ performed during His public ministry, before His crucifixion: 1) water made into wine [2:1-11]; 2) the healing of the official’s son [4:46-54]; 3) the healing of the lame man [5:11-18]; 4) the feeding of a multitude [6:1-15]; 5) walking on water [6:16-21]; 6) healing of the blind man [9:1-41]; and 7) the raising of Lazarus [11:1-57]. John also highlighted two of Christ’s miracles that occurred after His crucifixion: 1) the resurrection [20:1-29]; the miraculous catch of fish [21:6-11].

Another unique aspect of John’s Gospel is the “seven (metaphorical) ‘I Am’ statements” of Christ: 1) I am the bread of life [6:35, 48, 51]; 2) I am the light of the world [8:12; 9:5]; 3) I am the door of the sheep [10:7, 9]; 4) I am the good shepherd [10:11, 14]; 5) I am the resurrection and the life [11:25]; 6) I am the way, the truth, and the life [14:6]; 7) I am the true vine [15:1]. John also included several absolute “I Am” statements of Christ (see 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 18:5).

➤ This morning, we are going to look at the fourth “I Am” statement of Jesus Christ: “*I am the good shepherd*” (Jn.10:11^{x2}, 14). Jesus’ initial audience, the Jews, would have immediately and fully understood these aspects of the Shepherd-sheep analogy (although many misunderstood the interpretation and application of the analogy). For the occupation of shepherding was a common in Jewish life – first recorded in the book of Genesis (“*Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground*”; 4:2). In fact, the patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been shepherds (Gen.13:1-11; 26:12-14; 46:32; 47:3), as were Israel’s greatest leaders: Moses (Ex.3:1) and David (1Sam.16:11; 17:28, 34; 2Sam.7:8). Not coincidentally, it was to shepherds that the angels first appeared and announced the birth of the Messiah (Lk.2:8-20).

In addition, the imagery and analogy of shepherding is used throughout the Old Testament depicting God as Israel’s Shepherd and Israel as God’s sheep (see Ps.100:3; Is.53:6-7). It’s no wonder then why Jesus used this familiar and simple analogy to describe Himself as God’s Son and the Savior of all who would believe. It is clear from the New Testament that Christ’s apostles/disciples (eventually) understood this metaphor, as they would in turn use it in their preaching and teaching (e.g. Acts 20:28-29; Eph.4:11; Heb.13:20-21; 1Pet.2:25; 5:2-4).

➤ To be sure, these verses are no more inspired than any other verse/passage in Scripture. But we must recognize that Jesus is here both the speaker and the subject; both the teacher and the theme. This is Jesus’ own self-disclosure; His own revelation of Himself. Here Jesus is bearing His heart and soul concerning His own imminent death and supernatural resurrection.

John 10:11-18 ~ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He 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. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

➤ In this passage, we find four sacred truths about Jesus as “*the good shepherd*.”

1. The exclusive identity of “the good shepherd” (vs.11^{2x}, 14)

➤ In referring to Himself as “*the good shepherd*” (vs.11^{2x}, 14) Jesus was declaring Himself to be God. Specifically, He was proclaiming Himself to be the (anointed) Messiah of God, and Savior from God. He is the one whom the prophets declared would come.

First, in each of Jesus “*I am*” (*egō eimi*) statements contained a (sometimes) subtle yet (always) undeniable reference to His deity. For God declared Himself to be the “I Am” (*yāh / yhw̄h*; i.e., Yahweh or Jehovah) – the one and only self-existing and eternal God.

Exodus 3:13-15 ~ “Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?’ ¹⁴God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM [*hayah ... hayah*].’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM [*hayah*] has sent me to you.’ ¹⁵God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD [*yhw̄h*; Yahweh/Jehovah], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”

The two-word phrase “I am” translates the one Hebrew word (*hayah*) which means “to be.” It is from this Hebrew word that the divine name of God as Yahweh (Jehovah) is derived. When used of God, this word refers to God as the “I AM” – the self-existing, eternal God (i.e., always and forever the “I am”, never “I was” or “I will be”). The phrase “I Am” is in reference to God’s self-existent eternally. That is, God has always been and will forever be. He is never the “I was” or even the “I will be.” This is who we are called to worship – the only true self-existing, eternal God.

➤ This is to what Jesus was referring when He called Himself “I am.” This exposes the foolish (but prevalent) notion that “Jesus never claimed to be God.” For we see in Scripture that Jesus clearly, emphatically, and repeatedly declared Himself to be the one and only Son of God, and one and only Savior from God.

John 8:58-59 ~ “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am [*egō eimi*].’⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”

John 10:30-33 ~ “‘I and the Father are one.’”³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?’ ³³ The Jews answered him, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.’”

John 10:24-26 ~ “So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’”²⁵ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me,’²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.”

Mark 14:60-64 ~ “And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, ‘Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?’”⁶¹ But [Jesus] remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed [“*Son of God*” (Matt.26:63)]?’”⁶² And Jesus said, ‘I am [*egō eimi*], and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, ‘What further witnesses do we need?’⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death.”

John 10:37-39 ~ “‘If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;’³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.’”³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.” (see Jn.7:30, 44)

➤ In addition, in John 10:11, 14, Jesus specifically identified Himself as the “*good*” shepherd. The adjective “*good*” (*kalos*; vs.11^{x2}, 14, 32, 33) refers to that which is beautiful or valuable, but also morally virtuous and right (see Lk.18:19 [*agathos*]). This not only speaks to Christ being morally pure and perfect (sinless), but also to the fact that He is the model shepherd from which all others should follow (i.e. “*the great shepherd*” Heb.13:20; “*the chief shepherd*” 1Pet.5:4). All are true because He is God, the one and only Son of God.

Notice that Jesus did not call Himself a good shepherd but “*the*” good shepherd. This speaks to the exclusivity of the Gospel – that salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

John 10:16 ~ “... So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

John 3:36 ~ [John] “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

John 8:24 ~ [Jesus] “I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”

John 14:6 ~ [Jesus] "... 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Acts 4:12 ~ [Peter] "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

1 John 5:12 ~ [John] "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

- Jesus is the only Savior from God because He, as God's Son, is the only true and perfectly good shepherd.

2. The sacrificial love of "the good shepherd" (vs.11-13)

- The second sacred truth revealed in this passage about Jesus as "*the good shepherd*" is His sacrificial love. Jesus said, "*The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (vs.11). The analogy is not difficult to grasp, but its meaning is truly staggering. Clearly, a "good" shepherd would seek to fend off every "*thief*" and "*robber*" (vs.1, 8), as well as every "*wolf*" (vs.12), risking his own life in order to protect the sheep.

Shepherding may not sound to us like much of a dangerous, or life-threatening, occupation (after all, how threatening can sheep be?). While sheep are virtually harmless, they are also extremely vulnerable. If not for the shepherd, sheep would be easy pickings for thieves and robbers, and easy prey for wild animals like wolves, bears and lions (see 1Sam.17:34, 37). Because the sheep are so susceptible to attack – prone to wander, defenseless, and often many in number – the shepherd must be courageous, vigilant and ready to protect his sheep at all cost. The danger in being a shepherd is not from the sheep, but from all those who want to harm the sheep.

- In verse 11, however, Jesus was not speaking figuratively but literally: "*The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (or, "the good shepherd dies willingly"). He was referring to His own imminent sacrificial and substitutional death on the cross. His death would not be imaginary or merely symbolic. Jesus would actually give His life for His sheep – for all those who would believe in and love Him as their Lord and Savior.

The phrase "*lays down*" (*tithēmi*; or "lay it down") refers to a voluntary, sacrificial death. Jesus used variations of this phrase four times in this passage:

John 10:11 ~ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down [*tithēmi*] his life for the sheep."

John 10:15 ~ "just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down [*tithēmi*] my life for the sheep."

John 10:17-18 ~ "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down [*tithēmi*] my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down [*tithēmi*] of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down [*tithēmi*], and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

- Elsewhere we can see that the phrase clearly signifies a willful, selfless and sacrificial death: "*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord*" (Jn.10:18).

John 13:37-38 ~ "Peter said to him, 'Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.' ³⁸Jesus answered, 'Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.'"

John 15:13 ~ "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends."

1 John 3:16 ~ "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."

- Jesus' death on the cross was no accident, and it was certainly not without divine purpose (see Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). In this sense, Jesus was not assassinated or martyred. His death was neither a mistake, nor meaningless tragedy. His death was planned (foreordained) by God before the foundation of the world (1Pet.1:20; Gen.3:15; Eph.3:11; 2Tim.1:9-10)! In fact, Jesus was sent (and He Himself came) to earth for this very purpose: to live a sinless life, die a sinner's death, and supernaturally raise to live again.
- Theologians refer to Christ's crucifixion as His substitutionary or vicarious death. Which simply means that He died in our place, for our sins. He did not die for His own sins, because He was sinless (2Cor.5:21; Heb.7:26; 1Pet.2:22-24; 1Jn.3:5). Christ's death on the cross perfectly satisfied God's wrath against our sin, for "*the wages of sin is death*" (Rom.6:23). This has been called "the great exchange" – Christ bearing the punishment and death for our unrighteousness while we receive the glory and reward for His righteousness.

2 Cor 5:21 ~ "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

1 Peter 3:18 ~ "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit"

Isa 53:4-6 ~ "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

- In stark contrast to the "*hired hand*" (vs.12, 13) – who "*cares nothing*" (vs.13; *melei ou*; not at all concerned) for the sheep and "*flees*" (vs.12) when he sees the wolf coming – Jesus, the good shepherd, "owns the sheep" and truly loves His sheep and is willing to give His life for the sheep: "... *The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (vs.11).

Rom 5:8 ~ "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Eph 5:2 ~ "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (see Eph.3:19)

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3. The perfect knowledge of "the good shepherd" (vs.14-16)

- The third sacred truth in this passage about Jesus as the good shepherd is His perfect knowledge. In verses fourteen and fifteen we read: "*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father ...*" (vs.14-15). Four times in these two verses Jesus used a word – translated "know" – which, in the Greek language (*ginosko*), can refer to the intimate and personal knowledge within a love (e.g., marital) relationship (see Matt.1:25, "[Joseph] knew [Mary] not until she had given birth to a son"). As the Good Shepherd, Jesus' wisdom of His sheep extends beyond mental facts and information. The fact that He "knows" His sheep expresses that He has a sovereign love and divine affection for His sheep.

The truth that lies within these verses is simply staggering. To be sure, Jesus has intimate, exhaustive, and perfect knowledge of each and every one of us. Furthermore, Jesus said: "*I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father*" (vs.14-15; "just as", *kathōs*). This means that – in, and for, and because of Christ – we share in the divine affection between the Father and the Son. There is no greater or deeper or purer relationship than the eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son. In Christ, we are graciously and powerfully enabled to share in that relationship.

John 15:9-10 ~ “As [*kathōs*] the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as [*kathōs*] I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”

John 17:11 ~ “And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as [*kathōs*] we are one.”

John 17:14 ~ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as [*kathōs*] I am not of the world.” (also vs.16)

John 17:20-26 ~ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as [*kathōs*] you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as [*kathōs*] we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as [*kathōs*] you loved me.

²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” (see Eph.1:6; 2:4-5; 3:17-18; 1Jn.3:1)

- There is simply no greater comparison to be made. Christ has perfect and complete and affectionate knowledge of all those truly belong to Him.

Matt 7:21-23 ~ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (see Matt.25:1-13)

Gal 6:7 ~ “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

Heb 4:13 ~ “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

- God knows (and has always known) absolutely everything about you (and everyone). There is nothing that God does not know (Ps.139:1-6). He is never surprised, never mistaken, never ignorant. Which means that God never learns anything new. He knows every sinful thing you (and I) have ever done – every sinful attitude, thought, action and inaction. He fully knows the seemingly incalculable number of our sins against Him – even those that we have forgotten or did not think were sinful. He knows those sins that we may think of as our most heinous sins, as well as those we perceive to be rather innocuous. God is never caught-off-guard or enlightened when we confess our sins to Him. It is therefore pointless and foolish to think that we can keep our sins hidden from God.

Since God “*knows everything*” (1Jn.3:20), we can be assured that His offer of forgiveness is not out of ignorance. He will never say, “If I had known you had committed *that* sin – or that many sins – I would have never promised to forgive you!” ***Jesus is willing to love you and to forgive even though He knows everything about you!***

It is with full (intimate) knowledge of who we really are, that God offers salvation to everyone who believes in Jesus as their Lord and Savior (Jn.3:15-16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47, 54; Rom.10:9-13). Consequently, every Christian who is truly saved is eternally saved. The evidence of true salvation is that Christians truly “*listen*” (Jn.10:8, 16; cf. 10:3, 27) to the “*voice*” (Jn.10:3, 4, 5, 16, 27) of Christ, and truly “*follow*” Him (Jn.10:4, 5, 27; cf. Lk.6:46).

John 10:27-30 ~ “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give [*didōmi*] them eternal life, and they will never perish [*apollymi*; see Jn.3:16], and no one will snatch [*harpazō*; i.e., by force of violence] them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given [*didōmi*] them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch [*harpazō*] them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

John 6:15 ~ “Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force [*harpazō*] to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.”

John 10:12 ~ “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 [*harpazō*] them and scatters them.” (see Acts 8:39; 1Thess.4:17; Jd.1:23)

John 6:37-40 ~ “All that the Father gives [*didōmi*] me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out [*ou mē ekballō*]. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing [*mē apollymi*] of all that he has given [*didōmi*] me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (see Jn.6:44, 65)

1 Peter 1:4-5 ~ “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept [*tereo*] in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded [*phroureo*] through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Jude 24-25 ~ “Now to him who is able to keep [*phulasso*] you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Phil 1:6 ~ “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion [*epiteleō*] at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Rom 8:29-30 ~ “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

Rom 8:38-39 ~ “ [Nothing] ... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

2 Tim 2:19 ~ “But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are his’ ...”

1 John 5:13 ~ “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know [*oida*] that you have eternal life.” (see 1Jn.2:19)

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➤ John 10:16 is one of the more misunderstood, and abused, verses in all of Scripture: “*And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd*” (vs.16). It has been used to support the view that after His resurrection Jesus then went to other planets (and galaxies) and repeated His work of redemption – i.e. His death, burial and resurrection. Others have twisted this verse to suggest that Jesus has sheep from religions other than (and even contrary to) Christianity. We know that after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of the throne of God (see Acts 1:9; Mk.16:19; Rom.8:34; Eph.1:20; Col.3:1; Heb.1:3).

When Jesus said, *“And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd”* (vs.16), He was not referring to other planets or other religions. He was referring to other Christians. Specifically, He was referring to those outside of Israel – the Gentiles. Jesus is the “one shepherd” of every true believer. All those who put their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – both Jews and Gentiles – represent *“one flock”* of Christians under *“one shepherd”* who is Jesus Christ (see Rom.1:16; Matt.28:18-20; Eph.2:11-22).

John 17:20-21 ~ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me”

4. The divine authority of “the good shepherd” (vs.17-18)

- The fourth sacred truth in this passage about Jesus as the good shepherd is His divine authority. Notice the clear and absolute language Jesus used when He said, *“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father”* (vs.17-18). In just these two verses, we read that Jesus used the first person singular pronouns “I”, “me” and “my” a combined eleven times (there is no question as to the central theme of these verses)!

Jesus is not a victim, nor was His crucifixion an accident. He willingly died on the cross for our sins, and He miraculously raised Himself from the dead. Both Christ’s crucifixion and His resurrection were accomplished His own sovereign and supernatural power. The *“authority”* (vs.18^{x2}; *exousia*) Jesus referred to here is divine authority – both the divine right (prerogative) and might (power) – authority from God the Father (see Matt.28:18; Lk.10:22; Jn.3:35; 5:27; 17:2; Phil.2:9-11; Col.1:16-18; Heb.1:2; 2:8; 1Pet.3:22).

✓ Illust: “It is important for us to remember that the death of Christ, His perfect sacrifice for us, was voluntary. Pilate had no power over Him. Caiaphas had no power over Him. Annas had no power over Him. The Roman emperor had no power over Him. He laid down His life for His sheep, to save His sheep from something far worse than wolves, thieves, or robbers – the judgment of God” (RC Sproul, *St. Andrews Expositional Commentary: John*; p.191)

- This Christ made clear even during His arrest and trial, just prior to His crucifixion. We are told that Jesus went to the cross like a lamb to the slaughter, and *“like a lamb before its shearers is silent, so He open[ed] not His mouth”* (Acts 8:22). Unfortunately, some have misunderstood this to mean that Jesus never said a word; literally never opening His mouth. But this is a poetic reference – from the prophet Isaiah (53:7-8) – meaning that Jesus never gave a defense or tried to get Himself acquitted. While He often remained silent during the trials (Matt.26:63; Mk.14:61), Jesus spoke up when Pilate spoke of his political authority over Jesus:

John 19:7-13 ~ “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.’ ⁸When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. ⁹He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are you from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰So Pilate said to him, ‘You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority [*exousia*] to release you and authority [*exousia*] to crucify you?’ ¹¹Jesus answered him, ‘*You would have no authority [*exousia*] over me at all unless it had been given you from above.* Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.’ ¹²From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.’”

Matt 26:50-55 ~ “Jesus said to [Judas], ‘Friend, do what you came to do.’ Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵²Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³*Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?* ⁵⁴But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

✓**Illust:** “A full Roman legion was composed of 6,000 soldiers. More than twelve legions of angels therefore would be in excess of 72,000. If a single angel of God could slay 185,000 men in one night, as with the Assyrian troops of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:35), the power of 72,000 angels is unimaginable. Jesus explained to his impetuous disciple that He had immediate access to supernatural forces that easily could destroy the entire Roman army, not to mention the mere cohort of 600 soldiers (John 18:3) they now faced. Peter’s demonstration of self-willed bravery was therefore unnecessary and absurd” (John MacArthur, *Matthew: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*; 26:50b-53).

➤ Jesus was no victim, nor was He a ‘victim of circumstance.’ He was not weak or helpless. *“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again”* (vs.18). Jesus willfully, voluntarily, and humbly – by His own divine authority – went to the cross to die for our sins. He controlled His own destiny, doing everything according to His Father’s will and for His Father’s glory. He chose to die a substitutionary death for all who would ever believe. To take on the full penalty of their sin, and impute to them the full reward of His righteousness (2Cor.5:21).

Conclusion

➤ As Christians – those who are truly followers of the Lord Jesus Christ – we can be assured that we are completely known and completely loved by God.

Completely known, completely loved / My heart is seen by God above
Should I now run? Dare hide my face? / When in His eyes there is only grace

Completely free, the shame is gone / The highest Judge took all my wrongs
And set them on His only Son / He bore my sin, I bear His love

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

Completely His, how can it be? / That God would set His heart on me
Loved not for works that I have done / But long before time had begun

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

Completely saved, the work is done / The curse, the grave, is overcome
For with that dawn there rose a King! / Now heaven’s smile shines over me

Completely known, completely loved / I’m covered by my Savior’s blood
I’m robed in white and God is pleased / To see His Son, when He looks on me

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