



# Born to Win

## Feed My Lambs

by Ronald L. Dart

I wonder how long it took for Jesus' disciples to sort out what it was that he really wanted to do.

It's not merely that they were obtuse (although there are times, when you read through the gospel accounts, you really kind of think they were), and it's not merely that Jesus was difficult (although you read the gospel accounts and sometimes you think that he was). The problem was that the ideas that Jesus was presenting to them were *absolutely* new to them. You talk about "thinking outside the box", they were having trouble keeping track of *where the box was*; because Jesus was new wine; and, in a sense, they were old bottles. They had gotten used to Judaism. They were used to their own brand of it (which probably in most of their cases wasn't very formal, in any case). They were fishermen. They were tax collectors. These were not highly religious men until Jesus came on the scene and called them as far as we can tell. But they had *trouble* with what Jesus told them; and it took a long time, I think, for them to sort these things out.

Now, what you read in the New Testament is not really an accurate reflection of the way they felt at the time, or the level of understanding they had at the time Jesus told them these things; because by the time they wrote these down...oh, some 15, 20, 30 years had passed; and they'd had time to digest them. They'd had time to grasp the meaning of them. They had time for experience on the one hand, the Holy Spirit on another hand, and then on still another hand the awareness of Jesus' words all to blend together like a fine, old stew, and finally merge the flavors until they *understood* far better what it was they were doing, and why it was they were supposed to be doing these things. And so, at this time of year, you know we go back and we read through the gospel accounts sometimes about what it was that was happening.

When Mary came to the disciples, and told them that Jesus was alive on Sunday morning, after his crucifixion and his death on Wednesday, it was...they just didn't really believe it. They couldn't make it out. It was a shock to their system because...and hers, as well, because she had been out there crying by the grave-site. And when Jesus first spoke to her, she thought he was the gardener; she did not even recognize him for who he was. And one wonders if he was as that much changed, or if it was just that we would not, in those circumstances, be able to allow ourselves to *believe* that the person we were talking to was who he was. Because, after all, we had seen him die. We had seen him taken down, his limp body off the stake. We had seen them wrap him in the clothes. We'd seen them put in the tomb and roll the stone across it. And then to turn around a few days later and *run into him* on a hillside was a little bit more than Mary could handle. And when she came and told the disciples that he was alive, *they* weren't able to handle it. In fact, it was such a shock, I think, to all their systems it's really a marvel that they could even think straight during those days, those few hours, the initial weeks, frankly, leading up to Pentecost and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

Well, Jesus appeared to Mary early in the morning, but he didn't actually talk to the men until that night. And it was on a Sunday night, and you'll find the account in John, the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter, and beginning in verse 19:

**John 20**

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<sup>19</sup> Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, [...]

And well, they might have been. I mean, their leader had just been killed, and what was going to happen to the rest of them?

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>19</sup> [...Then] came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.

You know, one minute he is *not* there, and the next minute he *is* there. Again, you talk about a shock to the system. And it's a marvel, again, that they could even speak.

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>20</sup> And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

And finally began to believe that it really *was* him, and that he really was alive.

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>21</sup> Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

<sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive you the Holy Spirit:

Now, there's some question in people's minds as to whether this was the moment when they received the Holy Spirit, or whether this was a symbolic act of some kind; but it's really... I don't think that that's necessary to think of it in those terms. It's pretty evident to me that when Jesus comes to them, lays hands on them, breathes on them, and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit", that is the moment when these men received the Holy Spirit. What happened a few days later on Pentecost is when they were *empowered* with the Holy Spirit, which is a little different from receiving it; and I think that's how you should understand what happens to *you* when you're baptized, you come up out of the waters, and they lay hands on you and pray for you to receive God's Spirit. What happens to you is what happened to these men at this moment—you receive God's Spirit—and the time of the *empowerment* with God's Spirit is another matter altogether. And that depends on what God wants you to do, when he wants you to do it, where he wants you to do it, and how he wants you to do it. Then he said this strange thing. He said:

**John 20**

KJ2000

<sup>23</sup> Whosoever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever's sins you retain, they are retained.

Now, that's a lot of power. It certainly sounds like a lot of power—to be able to just say, you know, when somebody comes in and, let's say, confesses a sin and says, "Look what I've done, I'm sorry"; and you can remit that sin, or you can retain that sin. That sounds like a lot. But it's not exactly as you

and I would think; because what Jesus is doing...this is the moment when the interpretive authority for the Scriptures passes from the structure of Judaism at the time; it passes to the apostles of the church, as far as God is concerned, and as far as his church is concerned. From this moment on, Jesus Christ and these men are the interpretive authority for the Bible—that is, for the law, the prophets, and whatever else. So it's the interpretation of Peter, and James, and John, and Mark, and the others that begins to account for the decisions that we make. There's a name for this in Hebrew—for the interpretive authority that a Jewish community has. In the Old Testament, they were the priests and the Levites, or in some cases the judges that were established in those days; and they developed a whole body—a whole corpus, as it were—of interpretations by which their people lived. Well, Jesus came on the scene; and with the Sermon on the Mount he said, "You have heard it's been said, by the interpretive authority of old, 'Thou shalt do this', but *I* say unto you..." and he began to give them a *new interpretation* of the law (which as I said in a radio program recently was not so much *raising* the bar as it was moving the bar closer to you—in the sense that you realize that you have stepped over the line into sin earlier, sometimes, than you think you have). In old times, they told you, "Well, if you could just abstain from committing adultery, you were all right." You know, if you didn't actually do the act, if you didn't actually sneak into her house at night and go to bed with another man's wife, you hadn't done anything wrong. Jesus said [Matthew 5:28], "Oh, no. When you start lusting after that woman in your heart, and *contemplating* doing that, you're already over the line." This is *his* interpretive authority, his interpretation, of the law and the law's application to people. So what he does at this point is he says, "Okay, now I told you earlier that whatever the scribes and Pharisees said to do, you do that, because they sit in Moses' seat [Matthew 23:2–3]. What I'm telling you *now* is that *you* sit in that seat. You are the interpretive authority, as it were, for the church." And of course, that authority in the "Moses" for the church is who? Jesus. And these men serve under him, and they are the authority for interpreting the law.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

<sup>25</sup> The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the LORD. But he said to them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Now, you can look back on this after all this time (and we call him "Doubting Thomas" and he can get chided a little bit for it), but you have to realize that *nothing* like this had ever happened before. He had seen Jesus die. He knew that he was dead. And then to have someone...I don't *care* if they're your best friends. I don't care if you trust them with your life. For them to sit there and tell you, "I know he was dead, but he's alive and we've seen him", was just more than he could believe. He said, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to do it."

Well, Jesus was patient with him. Eight days later...Now, if you get the picture on this: the first event took place on a Sunday evening, which is about halfway through the Days of Unleavened Bread. In the meantime, the Days of Unleavened Bread is over; we've come to this day past it and gone beyond to another Sunday evening, when the disciples are once again gathered together in one place. And this time, Thomas is there.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>26</sup> And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the middle, and said, Peace be to you.

<sup>27</sup> Then said he to Thomas [*without any other preamble*], Reach here your finger, and behold my hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

<sup>28</sup> And Thomas answered and said to him, My LORD and my God.

All of a sudden, the realization came upon him that Jesus was not only his Lord, not only his Messiah, not only his Savior; but he was also *his God*. And that was quite a thing.

### John 20

AKJV

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And that's us. You know, we come all the way down to the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and here we are. We stand here today and we believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. *We* believe it because we have the testimony of Peter and James and John and Paul and the others; all of whom saw him alive after he had been dead; and so we also have this blessing upon us.

### John 20–21

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

<sup>31</sup> But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name.

<sup>1</sup> After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; [...]

The Sea of Galilee; that's what that is. Now, Matthew tells us that he told the women, he said, "Go tell my disciples that I go before them to Galilee, and I will see them there" [**Matthew 28:10**], and he set them a place where they were supposed to go and where they're going to meet him up there. But again, they had gone back. Now again, why were they back in Galilee? Well, the Days of Unleavened Bread were over. They obviously stayed in Jerusalem through that time and somewhat beyond it (and I can kind of halfway understand why they would linger there); but Jesus said, "No, I want to see you in Galilee." Why? Well, that was home, and they needed to go on back home. Probably they had things to finish, they had details to work out before they returned to Jerusalem. Why were they back in Jerusalem? Well, because they were going to be back down there for Pentecost; and Pentecost was the day on which the Holy Spirit was going to be poured out upon them. So they went back up to the area. And while they were there, they'd gone back home, Simon Peter in verse three says, "I think I'd better go fishing." That was their business. That was their job. And, I don't know...at this point in time they did not know what was coming. They did not know how long they would have to wait. They *probably* were smart enough to know (unlike some of us) that God's watch runs at a different speed from ours; and that what we think is a long time, God thinks is very quick.

### John 21

KJ2000

<sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We also will go with you. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any fish? They answered him, No.

<sup>6</sup> And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship [*You're on the wrong side of the boat.*], and you shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish.

Now, they knew that things like that didn't just happen by moving the net from one side of the boat to the other.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>7</sup> Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved [*who is John*] said to Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat to him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

And I suppose this time of year, a little later, it might have been warm up there; and working hard as they were, I expect it was simpler to work “naked” than it was to wear clothes that you had to wash later.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>8</sup> And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

They didn't even try to get it in the boat; they just pulled it onto the shore.

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>9</sup> As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Now, what is kind of interesting about this... I don't know why it had never really quite occurred to me the same way before but, you remember when Jesus fed the 5000? You look back at that, and it's tempting to go and see all kinds of symbolism between the bread, and breaking the bread, and the miracle of the bread, and feeding all these people, and why did Jesus bother, and so forth; but it did occur to me, when I was doing the sermon on grace, and looking at the God of the Old Testament, and how *gracious* he was in his dealings with people (when he did appear in the flesh), that Jesus was doing what a hospitable—a gracious—person would do: He was feeding his guests. These people had all come out to hear him, he had taught them, they brought no food, they were his disciples, and he did what he could do: He fed his guests as any gracious man, who had the power to do it, would do it.

And Jesus is standing on the shore; he doesn't call them in and wait for *them* to build a fire, and wait for *them* to cook the fish and clean the fish and so forth. He has the fire built, the fish laid on and already cooking out for everyone. He has bread there toasting alongside the fire and heating up, so that when they arrive after having worked all night he has prepared food *for them*. I think it's an interesting little insight into him and the way he works, for he did not have to do that. (I think it's rather interesting, also, that they took the trouble to record that.)

**John 21**

AKJV

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? knowing that it was the Lord.

And what's interesting about this at this point: not one of them, it says, dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They all knew it was the Lord. But the fact that they they didn't dare to ask him—that they kind of knew it was him—is interesting all by itself; because they have seen him, alive. You would think they would know. And then there were the disciples on the road to Emmaus that walked alongside him

and talked with him and didn't know who he was [Luke 24]. It really makes you wonder, sometimes, what kind of changes had taken place in him over this period of time. Why was it that they did not recognize him? For although he appeared to them with holes in his hands and a spear wound in his side at one point...I'd rather gather that, as he appeared to them in the flesh after this period of time, that he looked quite different to all of them. But they sat down, and they were eating, and you had this ridiculously awkward situation where nobody's saying anything about who this is.

### John 21

KJ2000

<sup>13</sup> Jesus then came, and took bread, and gave to them, and fish likewise.

<sup>14</sup> This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after he was risen from the dead.

<sup>15</sup> So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, [...]

Now, I gather from what comes on a little later that they were not really sitting around the fire—that they had gotten up and started walking along the beach, or along the gravel shore of the Sea of Galilee at this time, when he starts talking to Peter; because: One, the speech is for Peter; it isn't really for the others. It's a particular challenge for him. Secondly, later on, we'll see that John is following and walking along some little distance behind them. But the conversation is for Peter. In this conversation, Jesus says:

### John 21

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> [...] Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, love you me more than these? [...]

I don't know what "these" is. I've heard sermons down through the years from all kinds of people about what "these" are—"these" being going fishing, your business, things of this world, the other disciples. I mean, what...I don't really think it matters very much. "Do you love me more than all this?", was what Jesus said. When Peter did not even bother asking him what "all this" was, he said:

### John 21

AKJV

<sup>15</sup> [...] Yes, Lord; you know that I love you. He said to him, Feed my lambs.

Now, the question logically arises: Why is Peter getting this little third degree here when nobody else is? And I think the answer is not so much that Peter was the all-important one, as it is that Peter had denied Christ three times. So *three times* he is now asked to affirm his love for Christ in this situation. And it isn't as though Christ doubts Peter; I think as much as anything else it is to establish or eradicate the doubts in Peter's own mind about whether or not he is now accepted by Jesus. And you can understand why he would feel awfully guilty, can't you, about having denied Christ three times; and really wondering, since he knew Jesus knew everything, was going to know that he'd done it (and told him ahead of time he was going to do it) to wonder how Jesus felt about him? So these three times Jesus says, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" And he said, "Yes, Lord, you know that I have affection for you."

Now, I've heard a lot of messages also about this—that Peter sort of dodges the question a little bit; because Jesus uses the word *agapáo* [ἀγαπάω, Strong's G25] for love, and Peter responds with *phileó* [φιλέω, Strong's G5368], which basically is a kind of brotherly love, and isn't quite the same thing. Well, he basically gave him the challenge, and he said, "Feed my lambs."

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>16</sup> He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me? [*Using the same word.*] He said unto him, Yea, Lord; you know that I love you. He said unto him, Feed my sheep.

<sup>17</sup> He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me? [*“Have affection for me.” He switches to Simon’s own word at this point.*] Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Do you love me? [...]

It really bothered him; it hurt him, as well it might.

**John 21**

KJ2000

<sup>17</sup> [...] And he said unto him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Jesus said unto him [*Finally, the third time.*], Feed my sheep.

Now, when I read this, I sometimes wonder if we have the right handle on our mission. Evangelism is very high on our list of priorities, but Jesus’ commission was not so much to evangelize when you look at it—at least not to “evangelize” in the way that we use the term. The word evangelize basically means “to spread the good news”. It comes from the word *evangelion* [εὐαγγέλιον, Strong’s G2098], which means “the good news”; and then turns it into a verb form, which means to “good news” everybody, as it were, or to proclaim glad tidings or the good news. And so, the idea is almost as though the proclamation of the good news is like an announcement. You know, you can put a sign on a bulletin board and you’ve done your job; or you can have a television program that goes out to all the places around, and it proclaims a kind of form of the good news, and you’ve done your job. But if you go back and actually look at this, it doesn’t say “evangelize”. It is not a commission to evangelize. You know, “evangelize” is kind of a general word we gather around this, but look at what it says in Matthew 28 and verse 19:

**Matthew 28**

ASV

<sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:

<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

Now, historically we have called this the “two-fold commission”. The first commission is to proclaim the gospel to the world for a witness, the second commission is to *feed the flock*—that is, to teach the flock (the sheep of God) once they have come into the flock of God. Actually, what if this is not a two-fold commission? What if this is all just one statement of commission? Because a “disciple” is what? It’s somebody you teach; it’s a pupil, a student—someone who comes in, and sits down, and you explain things, and teach things to. “I want you to make students”, he said, “out of all nations.” Now, in the process of turning a person into a *disciple* of Jesus, you have not made that person a converted person. All they are doing at this point is *learning* from him. Jesus, while he was here on the earth, had disciples in their hundreds, perhaps in their *thousands*—people who walked up and down the roads behind him, people who gathered around wherever he was; and they said they believed him. They believed him... up to a point; and beyond that point, there was one occasion where his sayings got a little tough for them, and it said...

<sup>66</sup> From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

So it's a distinction, I think, that we might want to keep in mind: *We* can make disciples; Jesus Christ will *build his church* out of and around those disciples. We don't actually build the church, we make disciples.

Now, how do you make a disciple? Well, if you look at this again it could be as easily saying, "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them"—that it is in the process of teaching that we make the disciples; because after all, you're trying to turn them into pupils, into learners who receive the teaching and respond to the teaching, right? So teaching and making disciples...there's really not much between them. Our task, then, is to go out and make disciples.

Now, I am not so sure, as I said, that this is a two-fold commission. In Jesus' words to Peter, "Feed my sheep", he has said the equivalent of what he said when he said, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you", right? Most Christian people would describe what I'm doing right now as "feeding God sheep". You know, you often will use these terms yourself: "We get spiritual food here", "I come to be nourished spiritually and to hear the word read and spoken and taught", and so forth. So we could argue that that's what's going on here; but this is a different commission from the first commission only if you assume that Jesus' sheep are to be found *only in the church*. Think about that. You can consider Peter's "Feed my sheep" as the second commission *only* if you consider that all of God's sheep are in the church. Is that true? If you'll turn back a few pages in John, to chapter nine; because I want to try to get you to think about this a little differently—to think outside the box, and we'll try not to lose track of where the box is while we think outside the box.

## John 9

<sup>1</sup> And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

<sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

<sup>4</sup> I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work.

<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

<sup>6</sup> When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

<sup>7</sup> And said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

Now, why do you think that Jesus spat on the ground, and made clay, and put it on this man's eyes, and healed him in this way? Because he could have done it by saying the word, couldn't he? He could have done it by putting his thumbs on the guy's eyes, or he could have clapped him on the ears and said, "Be healed!", like some evangelists might do. He might have flopped him on the ground, slain in the Spirit. He could have done a lot of things. Why did he do that? Well, it was, I think, a deliberate provocation of the Pharisees; because to make clay on the Sabbath day (and this was on the Sabbath day) is work, and you're not supposed to do that. You know, you wouldn't make mortar and build your house on the Sabbath day, would you? Well, of course not. Well, what are you doing making clay to heal a man's eyes? I mean, aren't there six days of the week when you can heal people? What are you healing them on the Sabbath day for [Luke 13:14]?



Well, that was the *interpretation* of the existing authority. Jesus is here to say, “Sorry, boys; *I’m* the authority. *I* am your interpretive authority on the law. What *I* say can be done on the Sabbath is what can be done.” That’s one of his points; and so he seemed to be deliberately, wherever it was convenient for him to do so, provoking these people. Like I said, the man with the withered hand could have been healed *any* day of the week. Jesus healed him in the synagogue, on the Sabbath day, in front of a whole bunch of people, just by speaking the word; because he wanted to make his point—not merely about who he was, but that their interpretations of the Sabbath were all wrong.

### John 9

AKJV

<sup>8</sup> The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

<sup>9</sup> Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore said they to him, How were your eyes opened?

<sup>11</sup> He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

Hard to imagine what that meant to him.

### John 9

AKJV

<sup>12</sup> Then said they to him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

<sup>14</sup> And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

<sup>15</sup> Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said to them, He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and do see.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keeps not the sabbath day. [...]

Well now, that’s a logical statement, by the way. This is not necessarily a wrong precept that he’s dealing with here; because the fact that a man might be able to perform a miracle, but who breaks God’s law...that’s something you’ve got to watch out for. So in raising that question, they were justified in at least raising the question.

### John 9

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> [...] Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

<sup>17</sup> They say to the blind man again, What say you of him, that he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

<sup>18</sup> But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

<sup>19</sup> And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? how then does he now see?

<sup>20</sup> His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

<sup>21</sup> But by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

Now, the reason they were so cagey was...

**John 9**

AKJV

<sup>22</sup> [...] because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

<sup>23</sup> Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

<sup>24</sup> Then again called they the man that was blind, and said to him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

<sup>25</sup> He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know [*I know one thing, and I've got it down pat.*], that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

<sup>26</sup> Then said they to him again, What did he to you? how opened he your eyes [*Just going on and on and on.*]?

<sup>27</sup> He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: why would you hear it again? [...]

He's pretty bold and pretty cocky, this fellow. And I think you might be the same way if you've been blind for all those years and now were able to see.

**John 9**

AKJV

<sup>27</sup> [...] why would you hear it again? will you also be his disciples?

<sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, and said, You are his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

Well, there is a difference, isn't there?

**John 9**

AKJV

<sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from where he is.

<sup>30</sup> The man answered and said to them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, [...]

The sarcasm is dripping.

**John 9**

AKJV

<sup>30</sup> [...] Why herein is a marvelous thing, that you know not from where he is, and yet he has opened my eyes.

<sup>31</sup> Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he hears.

<sup>32</sup> Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

<sup>33</sup> If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

<sup>34</sup> They answered and said to him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God?

<sup>36</sup> He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

That's really astonishing. This is *really* astonishing. This man wasn't healed because of his faith; he was healed because he was picked out as a *deliberate* provocation of the scribes and Pharisees to accomplish *specifically* what Jesus wanted to do; to make a statement he wanted to make, he *picked him out*. Then something interesting happens on that.

### John 9

AKJV

<sup>36</sup> He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

<sup>37</sup> And Jesus said to him, You have both seen him, and it is he that talks with you. [*It's me.*]

<sup>38</sup> And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

<sup>39</sup> And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

<sup>40</sup> And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said to him, Are we blind also?

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you should have no sin: but now you say, We see; therefore your sin remains.

Basically, what he's telling him is: "You don't have any excuse. If you were blind, you *would* have some excuse." And then he launches into what I wanted to talk to you about. I gave you all that to give you a little bit of background leading up to chapter 10, where Jesus addresses this question of who his sheep are. And I don't know that we really quite have got our minds around this, because when he kept telling Peter, "Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep.", three times, that the implication of this has *long* been drawn in churches in our tradition is that that was an admonition to feed *the church*. It was to help the church to grow, to get the church people together. "Feed my sheep, as the church are my sheep."

Well now, who were God's sheep *before* Jesus showed up? Who were God's sheep *before* he built the church. For in fact, he said (in the future tense):

### Matthew 16

AKJV

<sup>18</sup> [...] on this rock I will build my church [*in the future*]; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Did he have no sheep at this time? Were there none prior to this time? When did he finally have some sheep? Well, these men—who were the shepherds of Israel, the Pharisees, who sat in Moses seat, who would throw a man out of the synagogue for no other reason than he had stood there before them and said, "I was born blind; now I can see. How has it happened? A man named Jesus made clay, put it on my eyes, said, 'Go and wash in the pool of Siloam.' I went and washed; and I can see. I don't know anything about this man. I'm not vouching for him or against him. I'm just saying, this is a marvelous thing that a man you never heard of has been able to make me see"; and you don't know anything about him, and you don't know where he comes from; and you can't vouch for him... And they threw him out the synagogue for that. These were, up until this point, the *shepherds* of Israel. Chapter 10:

### John 10

KJ2000

<sup>1</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

<sup>2</sup> But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

<sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

He calls his own sheep *by name*. Now, that is really interesting. I...I didn't know shepherds named their sheep. I don't think, for the most part, they do; because there are too many of them; and, you know: you've seen one sheep, you've seen them all. But maybe, maybe not. Maybe shepherds are able to spot those differences. But nevertheless, he says he calls his own sheep by name. He knows them and leads them out.

## John 10

AKJV

<sup>4</sup> And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

Now, I don't know how to explain this to you; I'm just going to tell you that it is so: that in the world at large today, wherever you may go and whatever circumstances, you meet people who (for whatever reason) *seem to know Jesus' voice*. You can stand up and preach, you can proclaim his word, you can preach from his word. I can do it over the radio. (And don't make any mistake, I'm not talking about *my* voice being Jesus' voice—nothing of the kind. But what *I* am doing is I'm taking the words of Jesus, and I am reading them over the air, and I'm teaching from the words of Jesus. And what is really astonishing to me is that there are people who seem to recognize his voice. You don't have to prove a lot of stuff to them. They have to evaluate the scriptures, certainly. They have to look them up and "prove all things"; but it is really funny. And you know, we've noticed for many long years the fact that there are some people that you explain the truth to and it's like talking to a post; there are other people you start explaining the truth to and they soak it up like a dry sponge and want more. I mean, that phenomenon is sometimes very difficult to explain. The Worldwide Church of God explained it by a curious doctrine of "election"—that, "Well, God's blinded some people, and opened some people's minds" (which I'm not particularly going to argue with). But out of that doctrine of election came an idea somehow that it doesn't really matter whether we take the gospel over here; it doesn't really matter whether we take the gospel there; that maybe God isn't calling these people. And we kind of, in the past I think, have justified a lack of activity, a lack of energy, and a lack of drive on our part by the assumption: "Meh, God's not calling those people anyway." Well, I *will* say this: I do believe that trying to argue someone into the faith is an exercise in futility. I do believe that there are people who, when they come into contact with God's voice, as it were, in the Scriptures, they recognize his voice and they are drawn to him almost immediately. But *where are his sheep?* Where are you going to find them? And how hard are we expected to go looking for them? And how do you know, when you come into a city, whether God has many people there or few? Because when he [Paul] came to Corinth, God says, "You stay here, you work here,"...

## Acts 18

AKJV

<sup>10</sup> [...] for I have much people in this city.

Who were they? Paul didn't know. Paul didn't even know they were there. Paul had no idea whether there would be 100 converts, 200 converts, or 2000 converts in this city when he walked into it. So what was he supposed to do? Well, about all *he* could do is do what you and I can do, and that's our best. We put ourselves in the way of people, we put the gospel in the way of people, and we trust that God's sheep will know his voice. But I think we need to understand that all of God's sheep are not in what you and I call "the Church". Read on, what Jesus says in this particular situation. He says:

## John 10

AKJV

<sup>5</sup> And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

<sup>6</sup> This parable spoke Jesus to them: but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them.

<sup>7</sup> Then said Jesus to them again, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

<sup>8</sup> All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

And the fact is that he is referring to that gang of Pharisees who would put them a man out of the synagogue because he was healed by someone they did not recognize as an authority. You know, the way in which these men conducted their affairs, the way in which they accused Jesus of being demon-possessed [**John 7:20, Matthew 12:24, Luke 11:15**], the way in which they condemned him by calling him illegitimate in birth [**possibly John 8:41**], all the names they called him all this period of time, establishes these people as *thieves and robbers*. They are not the good shepherds of the sheep. And he says, in this particular thing, the sheep will not hear them; and they're afraid of them, and they won't follow them. And I think, whenever you read the New Testament and you see who the people are that are drawn to Jesus, they are not the religious establishment, are they? The religious establishment rejected him.

Who followed him? Well, fishermen, who are probably something close to the second-lowest rung of society, maybe the lowest; it just depends on whether they or the sheep herders would have been considered the lowest rung of society at that time. A tax collector—a guy who was generally regarded as a thief in the society at that time, a man who was hated and despised (perhaps even more than the IRS agent would be today), and so on it goes. These were not the authorities; they were not the religious establishment. These were the people, though, who were leading the people. And of those people who were in those positions of authority, he said that, “My sheep don't respond to those men.” And as a consequence, there was a very large body of people in first-century Judea who were neither Pharisees nor Sadducees—who basically were religious; they believed in God; and as far as they're concerned, they kept the holy days, they kept the Sabbath, they went down to the Passover and sacrificed a lamb and all that; but as far as being a part of one of those outfits? No. No, they weren't. There is a presumption on many people's part, reading the New Testament, that really everybody in Judea at that time was divided into two camps: Pharisees and Sadducees. If you know human nature, you should know better than that; you should realize that these are the two camps of the political establishment of the time, and that the vast majority of the people were *neither*; and whatever faith they had was kept to themselves, or it was a very practical faith, possibly.

## John 10

KJ2000

<sup>9</sup> I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

<sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

<sup>12</sup> But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep.

<sup>13</sup> The hireling flees, because he is a hireling, and cares not for the sheep.

Who is the shepherd who cares for the sheep? It's Jesus, pure and simple. There is *one* shepherd. And I guess the rest of us, who many people *might* call shepherds of the sheep or pastors of the flock, really are far better described, probably, as sheepdogs—the ones that the shepherd sends running out there to

do a little barking, to kind of head them back this way, perhaps; to do something of that nature. But to say that *we* are the Good Shepherd? No. No, that's not us. He is the only one who is the shepherd.

**John 10**

AKJV

<sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

<sup>15</sup> As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And then he says this:

**John 10**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: [...]

Every once in a while we come across that and we wonder what he meant by that. Well, by and large, I think a listener to him who heard him make this statement at the time—his own disciples sitting around him—probably thought what he *meant* was that the fold was Israel. And they may or may not have, by this time, begun to get their mind around the fact that Jesus was not going to be a shepherd only to Israel—that he intended to be a shepherd to the entirety of the world, that he was going to call sheep from *everywhere*. And so he did. But what he is saying (this is another one of those little hints in Jesus' gospels) is that he intends to look out to the entirety of the world.

Now, “other sheep I have that are not of this fold” is really fascinating because, down through time, it's a habit of religious organizations and churches to start trying to develop criteria for the definition of “the one, true church”; and by the strangest coincidence, the criteria that define the one true church are also defining criteria of that particular group. In other words, “Let's see what we're like. Well, this is what the one true church is like.” So we put down our criteria: the one true church is like this. Well surprise, surprise. We match these criteria; we are the one true church. The problem with it is that whatever place you find yourself, with whatever group you find yourself in—whether it be with one the corporate churches, a local church, or whatever you find yourself in (or be it the Worldwide Church of God many years ago, when they thought they were the only...all of us thought we were the only one true church that there was)—wherever you find yourself at that point in time, you should always realize that *this is not all there is to God's sheep*.

“I have *other* sheep that are *not* of this fold.” Where are they? I don't know. But you see, if you are going to serve Christ, then you need to be on the *lookout* for his sheep; you need to try to *care* for his sheep; you need to go *find* his sheep—get up and get off and across the mountains and down the valleys and over the hills, and look wherever you can to *help him find his sheep*; because that is what we're on about. And he does goes on to say:

**John 10**

AKJV

<sup>16</sup> [...] and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

You know, in a sense, there is today one fold and one shepherd. The one shepherd is Jesus; but the one fold is not so easy to spot, because he has his boundary around that fold. When you go across England, I don't know how it's done in the sheep country in this country (I've been more exposed to sheep in the United Kingdom than I have here)...but you go up into that country and you'll find sheep all over the hillsides—I mean, wandering across the road—and there are no fences. And if there are, they are old rock fences; and they tend to be broken down, the sheep find a way through them somewhere. So the sheep are *all over* the place. And you'll find the sheep that belong to McGillicuddy over here, and the sheep that belong to McComb over there, and all of them. And you'll go out and say, “Well, how does

anyone know whose sheep's whose?" Well, they've got little marks on them. They paint them. I don't know if they use a spray can or a brush with paint, but they slap a dab of paint—of a certain color, in a certain location—on their sheep. And so when the time comes, they go out and they gather up all the sheep up together; they can go in and they can separate, and they know by the marks on the sheep whose sheep are whose. And Jesus said, "My sheep... I *know* my sheep." He doesn't have to put a mark on them; he *knows* them. And they know him, and they respond to him. And I think what we are reading here, if we can realize this, is that just because we're out here wondering around the world with a whole bunch of other people doesn't mean that Christ doesn't know who we are, and where we are, and what we are doing; and that he isn't taking care of us like a good shepherd would; because a lot of the time the good shepherd *leaves the sheep alone*. What's the work of sheep? Well, they eat grass and they make wool and they make mutton. That's what sheep do. And that doesn't require you to do very much *with* them or *for* them at any given point in time; and I think God puts us out here in the world to learn, to experience, to do, to find others who are of like mind, to be able to help *him* do his work in reaching out to people wherever we are. We have our work that we are supposed to be doing. (Oh, by the way, that's one of the work that sheep do: they make more sheep, don't they? And that, of course, is I guess one of the things he expects us to be doing.) So his fold is worldwide, and he knows where his sheep are, and the time comes when he pulls all his sheep back together.

Now, I said all that to say this: that there are a lot of people around who are busy building fences and creating folds. And we gather up all the sheep that we think belong to us, and we put them over here in this fold; and this guy gathers up all the sheep he thinks belong to him, and he puts them over here in this pen. And you've got these little sheep pens all over the place where people are gathered together. But there's a funny thing about this: Sooner or later, they've got to let those sheep out of those pens to go out on the hillside; and when they do, we're going to be together. And we need to understand, at any given point in time, that no matter who's got us penned up, and no matter where we are, no matter who's shearing us (if I may use that analogy), we still belong to one Shepherd. And I think we also need to understand that, when we gather together all the Sabbath-keeping, Holy-Day-keeping people together all in one mystical body of people, that Jesus would say to us still, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." And for us to think that we are all there is—we are the people, and wisdom will die with us, and we have the knowledge, we have the lock on God's word—we are making *a very large mistake*.

Now, God has his standards and God has his expectations; and it may well be you're supposed to... what Peter was told to do was "*Feed my sheep*." To me, this is the same thing as saying, "Go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to do all things that I have commanded you." And that then in the process of going to the world—in the process of you in a doctor's office leaving a brochure sitting there on the stand that tells somebody something that would help them through a time of difficulty—you may reach out there, and you may reach one of those sheep, and you may feed one of his sheep by leaving something like that for them. And when they pick it up, and when they read it, they will *hear* his voice, and they will *know* his voice as *he* touches their heart and as *he* reaches down and begins to work in their life. I think when the command comes out to "Feed my sheep", we need to realize he has other sheep that are not of this fold—sheep about whom we know very little, with whom we have had very little contact, and that the work to be done for us, and by us, down through the years that follow is *a lot bigger* than any of us *ever* would realize.

"I have other sheep that are not of this fold." And he seems—to me, to Peter, and to all of us—to be saying, "I want you to go *find* them and *feed* them." And in the process of feeding them, you will actually save lives; you will actually lead to people becoming disciples of Jesus; you will actually cause people to come to baptism and eventually to be in the kingdom of God—people who otherwise might be lost. Pray about that, and think about that.

Transcript of a sermon by  
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