



## David's Special Heart!

Are you a shepherd or a hireling?

Somewhere in the past, the LORD said of the great king, "I have found David the son of Jesse, *a man after mine own heart*, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22). What is it about David that God associated with so intimately? Clearly, one evident aspect of David's heart was his *integrity*. The Lord told Solomon, "if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, *in integrity of heart*" (1 Kings 9:4). However, many men of God had great integrity. Consequently, there must be yet another indistinct or (*hard to grasp*) characteristic in the heart of David that allowed the LORD to closely identify with him! If we can get a hold of and emulate that one characteristic in our own lives, it would certainly enhance our walk with God!

One Sabbath in a Jewish synagogue in the city of Antioch, Paul said of the great king, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man *after mine own heart*." David clearly was a very special man of God. But, what specifically about the *heart of God* can we detect in king David? Those words that Paul uttered in that synagogue must have come through direct revelation; those precise words are nowhere recorded in the Old Testament. The closest we get to those specific words are found in what the LORD spoke to Samuel, "fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for *I have provided me a king* among his sons" (1 Sam 16:1). God explained to Samuel that, "the LORD *looketh on the heart*" (1 Sam 16:7), in the process of making His selections.

Saul described one significant attribute of David's heart; it was his desire to build a house for the LORD, "the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas *it was in thine heart* to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that *it was in thine heart*" (1 Kings 8:18). Saul pointed to this desire in David's heart as a key issue to God. However that is not the specific attribute we seek.

In order to discover this special attribute of heart, we must realize that God choose David because of his quality of heart while he was still very young, "say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, *I took thee from the sheeppcote*, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel" (2 Sam 7:8). David's heart was prepared in him while he was yet a child. After all of Jesse's sons had been examined by the prophet he said, "there remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, *he keepeth the sheep*" (1 Sam 16:11). The first thing that we learn about David even before his name is revealed is that he was a keeper of sheep! David



## David's Special Heart!

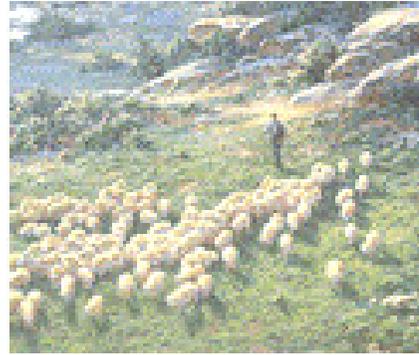
*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

wrote, "For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust **from my youth**" (Ps 71:5). We have observed in this study that David trusted the LORD;

he also sought to please the LORD. Of David, God told Jeroboam, "**who followed me with all his heart**, to do that only which was right in mine eyes" (1 Kings 14:8).

We have observed many fine qualities of David such as: integrity of heart; trust in the LORD; and seeking to please the LORD. We know he possessed many fine qualities, even some that we have not specifically identified in this study such as: courage; repentance; and respect for authority. But even these additional qualities do not give explanation of how David's heart resembled the LORD's. What was it about that young guardian of sheep that was so special and identifiable in the very heart of God Almighty? We need to know, "What is the secret characteristic of David's heart?" This Bible Study will focus on the special quality in his heart.

We can start out with the solution; stated as plainly as possible, the secret to David's heart was that he had a "**shepherds heart!**" We begin to observe his special heart in the Psalms that David wrote relating to his concern for the sheep, "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke **against the sheep of thy pasture?**" (Ps 74:1). David constantly set the needs of the sheep before his eyes; he had a caring heart for those dumb helpless creatures!



Even as a very young man, David had a genuine heart for sheep under his care, let's notice an account that bears this concept out. However, we must carefully examine the subtext to obtain the important information that we seek.

At some point in David's youth in one way or another he developed a skill for playing on the harp (*my personal suspicion was that he played on his harp while out with the sheep*). The knowledge of David's adept skill and proficient play "somehow" reached the ears of the King of Israel. An evil spirit had troubled Saul and he thought that David's soothing music might relieve his spirit-caused agony. In the passage of time, the king called on David's musical services, "David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him" (1 Sam 16:23). After his musical abilities proved useful to the king, David could certainly have protested, "Hey, the king needs me! I must stay near the king for who knows when that upsetting spirit will return." Instead, the scriptures reveal, "But David went and returned from Saul **to feed his father's sheep** at Bethlehem" (1 Sam 17:15). David turned down the prospect of serving in an important post; instead, he regarded it a higher calling to be tending his father's sheep. Notice another important aspect of David that is hidden in the subtext. Once he realized that he would be occupied serving the king with his harp, "David rose up early in the morning, and **left the sheep with a keeper**" (1 Sam 17:20). Even after having been summoned by the king, David was not careless about his duty or stewardship over the sheep; he recognized the personal responsibility to see to it that the sheep would be in the hands of a suitable stand-in during his absence.



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

Later in David's story, during the period that the giant taunted the children of Israel, he was disturbed by what he witnessed and sought out an audience with the king.

Because David was so keenly assured of his essential shepherding skills, he was empowered to convey his extraordinary abilities to the king, "David said unto Saul, Thy servant *kept his father's sheep*, and there *came a lion, and a bear*, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and *smote him, and delivered* it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him" (1 Sam 17:34-35). In the story David was obviously trying to convey his special abilities against any formidable foe. However, do not stop with that simple outward explanation. The subtext shows that David deeply cared for and was extremely protective of his father's lambs! Most if not all shepherds would immediately give up for dead the unfortunate lamb that finds itself already in the mouth of the Lion. This is not true of David, "As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear" (Amos 3:12); so too, David was the kind of shepherd that would not give up that easily. David stood-up against and fought the Lion and in so doing placed his own life in danger for the sheep!

We should notice a subtle point here. It is much like the modern adage, "You can take the boy out of the country; but, you cannot take the country out of the boy." In the same sense, "You can take the shepherd away from caring for the sheep; but you cannot take the caring for the sheep away from the shepherd." In one powerful sense, we need to realize that even while David was fighting the giant, he never left his sheep! What do I mean by that? Notice that David essentially used his shepherding tools throughout his battle against Goliath. In other words David went against the giant not as a soldier; but, as a shepherd, "he took his staff in his hand (*staff used for shepherding*), and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had (*obviously a shepherd's bag is used for shepherding*), even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand (*in the same sense, a sling is used for protecting shepherding*): and he drew near to the Philistine" 1 Sam 17:40. Later, David took a stone from his shepherd's bag and smote the giant. David was a good shepherd! He stood up against the giant not as a warrior but as a shepherd.

We have observed some of David's life as a shepherd. However, David lived three distinct and separate lives: (1) as a shepherd; (2) as a fugitive; and (3) as a king. In each of these roles, David continually exhibited a heart for the sheep! During the years when David lived as a fugitive he went out into the wilderness as he fled from Saul. In the wilderness, David encountered a very wealthy man of base character named Nabal (*interesting that this man's name spelled backwards is Laban another man of very questionable character*), "the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel" (1 Sam 25:2). There is nothing wrong with taking the fleece of a sheep; that is normal; however Nabal was totally unconcerned for those giving protection to his sheep. In other words, Nabal cared nothing for the safety of the sheep. Our LORD taught us that it is not unusual to lose one out of one hundred sheep, "How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matt 18:12). Given this ratio, it would have been entirely natural for Nabal's men to have lost as many as thirty sheep out of a flock of three thousand! However that did not



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

happen. Notice that the shepherds that were under David's protection in the wilderness said of David's armed forces, "They were a wall unto us both by night and day, **all the**

**while we were with them keeping the sheep**" (1 Sam 25:16). This means that the anticipated attrition or (gnawing away of sheep by fierce animals and human raiders) did not take place while David's men protected the sheep. Three thousand sheep is a very large flock! The point is that while David was out in the wilderness he naturally recognized sheep that needed protection! This understanding comes only from the "heart of a shepherd." David could have easily acted in the capacity of a looter himself and taken as many sheep as necessary to feed his men; but "the heart of a shepherd" would not allow him to take from the flock; instead, he protected the sheep!

Armed with this information now we can begin to comprehend that David actually realized that God protected him. David understood that God preserved him in the same fashion that he instinctively protected the sheep! For this reason David could genuinely write, "The LORD is **my shepherd**; I shall not want" (Ps 23:1). Given this added perspective of the heart of David, notice his continuing words, "He maketh me **to lie down in green pastures** (In God's care, David felt like a protected lamb): he leadeth me **beside the still waters**. (In God's care, David felt like a well nourished and calm lamb): 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me **in the paths of righteousness** (In God's care, David felt like a lamb on the correct path.) for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff** (David recognized that God used His own Shepherd's tools to protect him!) **they comfort me**. 5 Thou preparest a table before **me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over**. (Oil on a lamb's head protects him from flies and gnats (symbolic of demonic activity) which cause irritable rashes and triggers nostril larvae to grow. In God's care, David felt like a well-cared-for lamb.) 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (Ps 23:2-6).

Throughout his life, David always displayed out in the open for all to see that he had a shepherd's heart! Even when he fell into sin with Bathsheba and caused the untimely death of Uriah the Hittite, the LORD sent the prophet to David with a parable concerning the abuse of a lamb, "save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5 And **David's anger was greatly kindled** against the man" (2 Sam 12:3-5). Notice David's reaction to the abuse of merely one little lamb! God knew that David would react out of his "shepherd's heart!"

How did David's heart of a shepherd emerge in his role as the king? In the same fashion that he protected his flock, David always demonstrated a heart for the people! David continually demonstrated a "shepherd's heart." Likewise, God Almighty loves all those people who have absolutely no concern for Him! No matter what awful thing the sheep may get involved in a good shepherd never loses his concern for the sheep under his care! Notice David's reaction to his son Absalom who had recently launched a revolt against his



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

own father David! David did not grow angry against his son even in rebellion. He commanded his soldiers that were sent to put down the rebellion with the following words, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom" (2 Sam 18:5). David always had a soft heart for his sheep. In the same fashion, the Lord Jesus Christ has a soft and caring heart for His sheep, "I am the good shepherd: **the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep**" (John 10:11).

David (*the man after God's own heart*) sinned a grievous sin of adultery before the LORD and as a result his house was cursed by the Almighty, "Now therefore **the sword shall never depart from thine house**; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife" (2 Sam 12:10). Four people died because of David's sin with Bathsheba: (1) David killed Uriah the Hittite by the sword of the enemy of Israel. Natahan the prophet who was sent by God accused David of having, "slain him (*Uriah the Hittite – Bathsheba's husband*) with the sword of the children of Ammon" (2 Sam 12:9); (2) David's newborn son from his unlawful union with Bathsheba died; (3) Amnon (*David's firstborn son*) died as a result of having sexually taken his half sister Tamar whose full brother was Absalom, "And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for **Absalom hated Amnon**, because he had forced his sister Tamar" (2 Sam 13:22); and finally (4) Absalom the son who later caused a rebellion against his father David also died in keeping with the curse on David's house.

No matter what anyone might think about adultery, David's sin with Bathsheba was not his greatest failing before God! David sinned after his adultery; however, that sin was a deep spiritual sin fostered out of his own pride. That sin caused the death of many thousands of Israelites. David decided out of pride to take a census in Israel; however, when king David numbered the children of Israel he did not pay the half shekel for each man as set down in scripture and required during the counting of the people. This pride and lack of attention to the detail of God's law caused a great plague to come upon the people of Israel! David was forewarned and given time to change his mind regarding the census; nevertheless he persisted, "there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba **seventy thousand men**" (2 Sam 24:15). Notice David's reaction after God confronted him with his sin, "David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, **I have sinned**, and **I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done?** let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house" (2 Sam 24:17). David's heart deeply ached as he observed the suffering people (*the sheep of his pasture*)! David wrote about these sheep, "O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke **against the sheep of thy pasture?**" (Ps 74:1). As a king, David constantly set the sheep before his eyes; he had a true heart for those under his care.

There are many shepherds in the bible. The first, "Abel was a keeper (*shepherd*) of sheep" (Gen 4:2). The Hebrew word translated into "shepherd" is (*ra`ah*). The word is a primitive root which means, "to tend a flock;" that is "to pasture the flock of sheep;" literally it means, "to feed sheep." In a general sense, (*ra`ah*) can mean "to rule." We see the primary meaning of "feeding of sheep" in the passage, "water ye the sheep, and go and feed (*ra`ah*) them" (Gen 29:7). The sheep are so needy; they even need a shepherd to keep them moving into fresh pastures where there are locations of proper grasses for grazing. An Old Testament shepherd limited to the males. Laban's daughter who later became



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

Jacob's wife was a shepherd in her youth, "Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept (*ra` ah*) them" (Gen 29:9). Jacob made his fortune as a shepherd, "Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock" (Gen 30:31). All of Jacob's sons were shepherds, "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was *feeding the flock with his brethren*" (Gen 37:2). Indeed, Joseph had his brothers tell pharaoh, "Thy servants are *shepherds, both we, and also our fathers*" (Gen 47:3). Whether by accident or design, the family occupation extended several generations after Joseph and all the way down to Moses, "Moses kept (*ra` ah*) the flock of Jethro his father in law" (Ex 3:1).

Notice what the Psalmist wrote concerning David, "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: 71 From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed (*ra` ah*) Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72 So he fed (*ra` ah*) them according to *the integrity of his heart*; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Ps 78:70-72). There was a deep loving kindness that David shared with his sheep which is rendered into the English as, "*the integrity of his heart.*"

A special psalm describes the Almighty as the, "Shepherd of Israel," "Give ear, O *Shepherd of Israel*, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps 80:1). The psalmist had a revelation of the "Shepherd." Notice the capital letter signifying the divine. This special Shepherd is elsewhere identified as one who has a heart for the sheep. This Shepherd is called the "Lord GOD" by the prophet Isaiah, "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11 *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and *carry them in his bosom*, and *shall gently lead those that are with young*" (Isa 40:10-11).



Let's bring to mind a special prophecy that we will all recognize, "there shall come forth *a rod out of the stem of Jesse*, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him" (Isa 11:1-2). So we have the prophecy that a "*Shepherd of Israel*" will come and that he will be, "*a rod out of the stem of Jesse.*" We all know that this shepherd can only be Jesus Christ our LORD, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).

We know who is that true rod and offspring of Jesse! The entire 34<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Ezekiel focuses on shepherds. The entire chapter should be carefully read as a follow-up to our study. Notice just the one prophetic verse, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd" (Ezek 34:23). Notice that the LORD calls David his shepherd; yet, Jesus says that, "I am the Good shepherd." What does this mean? Who really is the shepherd? Why does mankind need a shepherd anyway? The Apostle Peter writes, "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the *Shepherd and Bishop* (*overseer or superintendent*) of your souls (*which includes our heart*)" (1 Peter 2:25). We all are just like David who asked of God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10). We can share this heart of God merely by asking of him! Later in that same psalm David wrote, "a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

wilt not despise" (Ps 51:17). Like David, we too can ask for a clean heart and an new spirit.

What are the eyes of the LORD looking for tonight? It is the same thing he has always sought after, "a man after God's heart!" Realize that Jesus is the Shepherd and David too is a shepherd under Jesus. The point is that as he did in David, Jesus is crafting or forming shepherds (*feeders of sheep – ra` ah*) who will operate under His overall direction. "And I will give you pastors (*ra` ah*) according to mine heart, which shall feed (*ra` ah*) you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer 3:15). We are all learning to be shepherds under the Good Shepherd.

From the text of John chapter 10, we are left to deduce that the "the Good Shepherd" sermon was delivered at the concluding stages of Jesus healing the man who had been born blind. In that same context the Pharisees had just asked Jesus if they too were blind. They actually argued and questioned whether or not Jesus was demon possessed. They literally concluded the narrative of the sermon by asking, "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Jesus started out His sermon on the "Good Shepherd," by teaching that there would be false shepherds. He went so far as to identify these false shepherds as thieves and robbers, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:1-3). God hates the false shepherds! He hates those who are outwardly supposed to lead the flock. Instead, they would destroy the flock by pretending to care for the sheep. We see this concept expounded by the prophets, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD" (Jer 23:1). Later, Jeremiah wrote, "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace" (Jer 50:6). The prophet Ezekiel's writings maintained the consistency of this idea, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (Ezek 34:2). God has been concerned about the well being of the flock since the beginning.

We know that Jesus had great compassion when he saw the multitudes because they were as, "sheep having no shepherd" (Matt 9:36). The reason that He had compassion was not for their lack of food or water; rather, their lack of a shepherd is what caused the Lord to be moved with compassion. God has consistently been concerned with the people. Indeed, his interests have always been that they might indeed have good shepherds. Jacob prophesied that the tribe of Judah (the Jews) would produce the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is *the shepherd, the stone of Israel*)" (Gen 49:24). As Israel was about to end their wandering in the dessert, God instructed Moses to consecrate Joshua as a shepherd over the nation, "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD *be not as sheep which have no shepherd*. And the LORD said



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the

congregation; and give him a charge in their sight" (Num 27:16-19). God's interest relative to the nation of Israel having a good shepherd did not end there. God instructed David that he was to be the shepherd of Israel, "And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, **Thou shalt feed** (*ra` ah*) **my people Israel**, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel" (1 Chr 11:2). One of David's charges was to feed his people! He fed Israel according to the integrity of his heart, "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Ps 78:70-72).

The amazing thing is that through his writings and example David is still teaching God's people today. As the shepherd of Israel we can learn many important lessons from David. He recognized God as being his own personal shepherd; indeed David wrote, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Ps 23:1-3). Whenever God sets individuals as shepherds over mankind in the future, we can be certain that they will have proven to God, as David did, that, "The LORD is my (*that is, their personal*) shepherd." As we accurately realize just how concerned God is in relation to His flock, it brings to mind the commission given to the Apostle Peter. We remember Jesus asking Peter three times, "Lovest thou me?" To which Peter replies, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my sheep**" (John 21:16). Peter was told to feed (*ra` ah*) the sheep of the LORD!

Starkly different from the role of the thief and the robber, Jesus was keenly aware that there needs to be a close relationship between the shepherd and his flock. On page 288, Philip Keller, a shepherd turned Christian teacher, writes of such familiarity when a flock owner approaches his livestock in his book, *The Inspirational Writings*, published by New York: Inspirational Press, 1993.

"Some come with gentle calls. They alert the sheep that they are approaching. Others whistle gaily as they near the gate so as to set the sheep at ease. Some sheepmen and shepherders in Africa love to sing soft plaintive tunes as they come to the corral or sheepfold.

All of these approaches are diametrically opposite to the sly, subtle tactics of the predators or prowlers who attempt to pounce on their prey by surprise. They want to catch the sheep off-guard and capture them amid their confusion. It is a crafty, cunning part of their plan of attack.

And when the shepherd reaches the entrance it is customary to tap on the gate, or rattle the latch, or knock on the door loud enough so that all within the enclosure are alerted to the fact that he is outside, ready to enter. More than this, he expects to enter."

Jesus spoke of this closeness when he said, "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

callesth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:1-3). Notice how Keller continues:

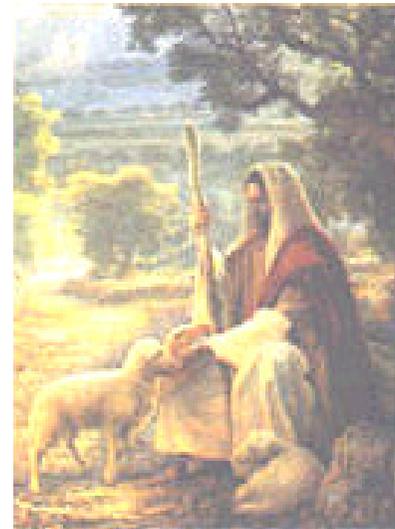
"In the case of a few lives the door is finally opened.

Our Lord made the unusual comment that it was really the "porter," the doorkeeper who opens the door. And it may well be asked, "Who is the porter? Who is the One who for the sake and welfare of the sheep opens up the sheepfold to the Good Shepherd?"

He is none other than the gracious Spirit of God Himself. It is He who, unbeknown to us, and long before we are conscious of the presence of Christ, comes to us quietly to begin His gentle work within. It is He who gradually prevails upon our spirits to respond. It is He who, even in the willful waywardness, is at work within us turning us toward the One who stands outside the fold of our lives. It is He who gradually overcomes our fears, our deep subconscious inhibitions toward Christ. He is able in His own wondrous way to pulverize our pride, to lead us gently to see the enormous folly of our self-centeredness. He generates within our wills the active faith needed to comply with and respond to the voice of the Good Shepherd.

It is then and only then that the door is opened to Christ. It is then that the guard, so to speak, is let down. Then the One outside is granted entry. For some this is an act of great apprehension. It involves a definite movement within the will. Yet it is God who works within us to will and to do His good pleasure. (See Phil.2:13.)"

Sheep respond best to the shepherd through a deep personal relationship that the shepherd establishes himself. They become very familiar with the sound of their shepherd's voice. The shepherd often sings a song or adopts individual pet names for his sheep as he individually communicates with them through delivering praise and discipline, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them" (John 10:4-6). Notice carefully the final concept taken up from the last verse. The Pharisees obviously heard Jesus' voice, but they simply did not understand. This lack of understanding placed them outside of the special category He had just identified, "the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."



The next major concept in Jesus' sermon becomes much more meaningful when we understand that the shepherd would regularly sleep at the entrance or the door of the sheepfold. From there he could not only guard who would go in and out during the night but he would also give comfort to the sheep by placing himself in the location of danger, "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (*Clearly salvation is linked to*



## David's Special Heart!

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

using the proper door), and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7-9). Note that the door is the instrument through which one may enter into the

sheepfold. In Jewish history YHWH the God of the Old Testament was the door to many more things:

In the world of the Hebrew rabbi, the door of one's home has powerful symbolism in the spiritual sense. This comes from the fact that the great Hebrew process of liberation from Egypt was directly associated with the door of man's home. An unblemished Passover Lamb was slaughtered for each household. The lamb's blood was liberally sprinkled on the lintel over the door, and on both doorposts. Every person who passed through this door into the shelter of the house was assured of protection and safety from the destroying angel who swept through Egypt in the night. Through that same door anyone going out entered into a new emancipation and delivery from their enslaved bondage. All who went out through that door entered into freedom and a new life under God's direction. These servants of Pharaoh therefore changed their allegiance as they passed through the door and became the servants of God, "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom 6:16).



Now let's focus on the concept of servitude or slavery. Judas bartered with the high priests for the betrayal of his Master, the price of thirty pieces of silver was agreed upon. It is interesting that this was the going price, of a slave in the slave market. If a slave served his master suitably and the two became attached to each other over a period of time, the master generally offered to set the slave free. The slave would then choose either to go free or become a bondservant to his master. He could choose of his own free will to remain with the master for the rest of his life. This would change his classification of servitude into a bondservant. In essence he became a higher-class servant; one who chose to serve the master! To confirm this covenant and sacred transaction, the master would take his slave to the doorpost of his home. There, he would place the slave's ear against the post. Then, using an awl he would pierce the servant's ear lobe; this process obviously smear blood against the doorpost of the master's home. This indicated that a bond was sealed for life, and that this slave had in fact become a love servant to the master for the remainder of his days. He would never leave that family; instead he would remain ever faithful to his owner. He was a member of that household; their life was his and his life was theirs.

This sacred devotion was not to be found amongst the hirelings. A hireling was only a temporary shepherd and would never risk his life for the flock, "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:13-15). Far different from the "Good Shepherd" the hireling was a casual laborer. He would be here today and gone tomorrow and was therefore essentially a transient worker. He obviously would take no special



## *David's Special Heart!*

*Are you a shepherd or a hireling?*

interest in his job. In Jesus' day the average wage for a hireling was a penny a day. Sometimes these drifters would be employed to tend sheep in the owner's absence;

however this arrangement seldom proved to be satisfactory. In this context our Lord used the hireling to represent those who were entrusted with the sheep, but had no real love or concern for them. The fact is that the secret to successful livestock husbandry is the shepherd's special love for the animals. This is exactly what the hireling would always lack since he had no stake in the flock. For the same reason, once a slave became a bondservant he belonged to the house and since he now had a stake in the flock, he naturally would be a good shepherd.

The real measure of a good shepherd is how well he knows the sheep under his care. Surely, we all realize that the measure of a good writer or a good chef or a good soldier is the extent to which he knows the materials and tools of his labor. When it comes to shepherding, "knowing" involves a great deal more than mere acquaintance with the sheep. A good shepherd handles his sheep so often that he "knows" their every peculiarity, inclination, and characteristic. The Good Shepherd most often will predict the behavior of any particular lamb under any given set of circumstances. He is never surprised by their individual and unconventional behavior.

That special heart of David mirrored the heart of Jesus Christ, the true Good Shepherd. Both of them had a heart for the sheep. They each had a "shepherds heart!" The heart of a shepherd is the greatest quality that we Christians can develop with the help of the LORD! God has given us a heart for the sheep too. All we need to do is ask the LORD for that "shepherds heart" and He will supernaturally work in us to develop that special heart of David. When we become true "bondservants" of the LORD, he will prepare our hearts to feed His sheep.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.