

# The Shepherd and the Sheepfold

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The sheepfold during Biblical times was a temporary safe shelter where the sheep owned by different shepherds, could safely spend the night. Oftentimes, thorny hedges along with natural barriers like the rocks in the photo above, were used to form a corral for the sheep. There was only one way into the sheepfold which was called the gate and there was a gatekeeper assigned so only the rightful shepherds, had access to their sheep.

Sheep have very good ears and they will know and follow their master's voice. In the morning when it was time for the shepherd to collect his sheep, the gatekeeper would allow the shepherd to come near the gate where the shepherd would make a unique noise and his sheep would separate themselves from the others, and come out to him.

It is pretty well known that sheep are both defenseless and dumb, a perfect metaphor for people that are lost and don't know it, and, defenseless against the enemy of their souls and in desperate need for a shepherd that will provide protection and direction.

Even a king verified this need when King David proclaimed that the "Lord is my Shepherd" in the wonderful 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

Sometimes the hedges that boarded the sheepfold was very high, sometimes approaching 9 ft. and the only way a thief could steal a sheep, was to kill it and then tear it from limb to limb and throw the pieces over the hedge.

So, anyone that was trying to get a sheep without coming to the door, was only there to steal, kill and destroy, they didn't care for the sheep at all.

## **Our Lord God is the Shepherd of Israel**

**Ezekiel 34:10-15** For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

**Cont:** And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD

### **Jesus Christ – The Good Shepherd**

**John 10 1-16** - Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

Then Jesus said to them again, most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. **I am the door.** If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly. **I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. **I am the good shepherd;** and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

**Note:** The word sheep is in the scriptures 188 times, the first is in Genesis 4:2 where we learn that Abel was a "keeper of the sheep" and as such, he was targeted for murder. The last use in the Old Testament is in Zechariah 13:7 where God calls Jesus, "My Shepherd."

Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the **Man** who is **My Companion,**" Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against (those brought low) the little ones.

**The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm:** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.