

## A summary of John 10:1-21

- 1. Why does John 10 occur at this juncture in the Gospel of John?** Chapters 4,5,6, and 8 give us examples of individuals who had a human need, and whose need was met by Jesus. In each case, Jesus meets the human need in order to reveal the real need, that is, God's need, which is the purpose of our human life. To the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, Jesus reveals Himself as the living water. In chapter 6, He reveals Himself as the bread of life, and His words as spirit and life. In chapter 7, He reveals Himself as the Christ, and to those who are still thirsty on the last day of the feast, He reveals Himself as the living water. In chapter 8, He reveals Himself to the woman caught in adultery as the light of life. In chapter 9, He reveals Himself to the blind man as the Son of God. However, in chapter 10, the focus shifts from man's need to who Christ is. Four times, in v. 7,9,11 and 14, Jesus says "I am." He is the focus. We are brought from our need to a revelation of who Christ is. This chapter may be called the hinge or stepping stone to a further revelation of Christ. Eventually, we are elevated from our human needs being met to a realization that Christ is the unique **door**, the unique way, and the unique **truth**. Everything we say, do and are must go through, by and unto Him.
- 2. There are several key words in chapter 10: Thieves and robbers (v.1,8).** If we speak or do something that does not go through Christ, we may be thieves and robbers, that is, we may damage brothers and sisters and rob them, and ourselves, of Christ. Acts 20:29-30 mentions "fierce wolves" which, Paul warns the elders of Ephesus, will rise up from "among" them. They may be those that take the lead. This can also be our case, if we are not watchful. If our speaking **and living** is not in Christ, or for Christ, we may fall into the same category.
- 3. The voice of Jesus and the voice of strangers (v.4,5).** How can we speak or minister in Christ? We need to hear His voice, and follow Him. Do we know the voice of Jesus? The sheep (the believers) follow Jesus because they know His voice. Jesus knows each of His sheep by name (v.3). **Not only we need to** know and hear the voice of Jesus, **but also** know each of the sheep (believers) that God has placed in our church life. Do we know the brothers and sisters? If we are shepherding some believers, do they know us, just as children know their parents? Or are we a stranger to the saints (v.5)? The saints should not regard us as a stranger, **they also should not be a stranger to us.**
- 4. The door, the sheepfold and the pasture (v.1,2,7,9).** All our speaking, serving **and living** must go through Christ as the door into the sheepfold, and out into the pasture. If our speaking and our serving are through Christ, the saints will be led into the sheepfold. The sheepfold, according to several Bible commentators, may represent the law of God, which is very good. The law can be described simply as God's speaking in the Old Testament. The law was given by God, and is something good and holy because it shows us who God is (His righteousness, holiness, uniqueness etc.). The purpose of the law is to guard us, or shut us up, as a protection, in order to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:23-24). The law, embodied by God's speaking in the Old Testament through His servants and prophets, is indeed the word of God spoken to us. If our faith is weak, the word of God spoken to us will indeed be **logos** to us, that is the constant word, which will instruct us, teach us and guide us (Galatians 4:1-2). This word, either read by us in the Bible, or spoken to us through God's servants, will be our protection, and even our pasture for our nourishment. However, we may still be children (weak in faith). In this case, we need to be in the sheepfold, and even live by the law (Galatians 3:12). For example, if we still trust our bank account rather than God, in one sense, we need the speaking of the "law" to correct us, and cause us to "live" by that speaking. This speaking, which is in the sheepfold, is our pasture. On the other hand, when the logos word becomes **rhema** to us, we are freed from the law. The word becomes spirit and life to us (John 6:63).  
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word of God and our faith free us from doing things out of duty or obligation. For example, we may now attend conferences and trainings, not because some brothers encouraged us to do so, or because a “good” brother or sister is expected to do so, but because we are free to do so, and we find it enjoyable to do so, in order to gain more revelation of Christ. The **rhema** in God’s word (in principle, the New Testament), becomes the freeing element to lead us through Christ, as the door, into the pasture. At this point, our speaking, once we are outside the sheepfold, enables us to supply life to others. Inside the sheepfold, at the most, as children, we can be protected and live a healthy church life for own growth. Outside the sheepfold, we can be freed by the **rhema** word to grow relatively mature in order to be a blessing to others, to cause others to grow and pillars to be raised up. Others may then know Christ in our words, and eventually follow the Christ in us to ultimately follow the Lord themselves. We must realize that if Christ is not our door, everything we do in the church life will be death (that is, routine, dead works). If we have Christ, but we are relatively immature (children, weak in faith), we will enjoy the pasture in the sheepfold as a protection, and we will grow through the receiving of the **logos** word. However, once the **logos** becomes **rhema**, our faith increases, and the pasture that we enjoy will become richer and cause us to grow in life and maturity. Once our faith grows, we are no longer controlled by the guardianship of the law (teachings) (**Galatians 3:25**), though we still need to hear and receive them. As we continue to receive the **logos** word, this word, becoming **rhema**, and eventually truth, sets us free from the law, to live a joyful life with Christ, for Christ and unto Christ, as the way, the purpose and the goal of our **living**.

5. **Hired hands versus the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-15).** A hired hand does not own the sheep (v.12). There is no life relationship between a hired hand and the sheep. A hired hand (a serving one) will take care of the sheep (believers) because he may have been appointed, or, by seniority, assumed that position. As serving ones, are we willing to lay down our lives for the believers and gospel friends? Are we willing to forsake our rights (for example, our sleep, our time, our money, our comfort), to **shepherd the saints**? A hired hand is actually a stranger to the sheep. Are we strangers to the saints? **Are the saints strangers to us?** Are we available for the saints in every situation and in every need? If not, the saints may not know who we are. In that case, we are like a hired hand, and we may even be responsible for some saints not growing spiritually (suffering spiritual death).
6. **The logos word, if it only remains logos, may cause division. The logos word, if applied to us in our experience to become rhema, will give life (10:19-21).** Jesus’ words, in 10:1-18, were indeed life-giving and Spirit filled. However, when heard by certain of His listeners, they had a negative effect, and caused the listeners to accuse Jesus of having a demon. To these people, Jesus’ words were merely words, or sayings (in Greek, **logos**, v.19). However, other listeners disagreed, saying that these same words (now **rhema**, v.21), were not the words of someone who had a demon. For example, if we use the Bible to give the law to others, to tell them what to do and what not to do, those same words, which are righteous and good, can separate believers and even cause division. If, on the other hand, those words speak to us and touch us, firstly, they will cause us to change in our living. Secondly, they will cause us to know the people to whom we want to speak. Thirdly, what we share will be one with Christ, and take into consideration the life level of the saints we are talking to (different in every case). Rather than imposing something on others, we will encourage and lead others to live a free and joyful life in Christ, according to Christ, and for Christ. Instead of division, the **rhema** words will bring in the one accord. **Since the saints are in different life levels, some words which are rhema to us but may be logos to some of them. This reminds us that we need to know the saints and then speak. It also means that the serving ones need to be very careful to speak to many saints (ex. Lord’s day), instead need to often shepherd the saints individually, then the words which are rhema to us may be also rhema to them.**