

He's the Only Way!

John 10:1-10 Text: vs. 9 *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."*

Have you ever been driving and suddenly discovered you were going the wrong way on a one-way street? A lot of people get killed doing that! And that's exactly what's behind our lesson today. There's only *one-way* to God. It's Jesus Christ. If you're trying to get to heaven any other way than through Jesus, you're going the wrong way, and there will be consequences!

The New York Times reported on a nationwide telephone survey of 1,000 randomly selected people who were asked whether they agreed Satan is *"not a living being, but rather a symbol of evil."* Sixty-two percent agreed he's only a *symbol* of evil! They *did not* believe the Devil is a *living being* which means over 188 million Americans out of 335 million believe Satan has no influence over them. One third believe He's just a *symbol* of evil.

But every Christian knows and understands, *Satan is real*. He's the *number one enemy* of everyone. Especially Christians! He's a one-way street going away from God. And he *is* a *created* being! Satan was an angel of great beauty and power before he rebelled against God. Scripture says he was kicked out of heaven when *"war broke out in heaven. The angel Michael and his angels fought with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back. But they did not prevail. Nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So, the great dragon was cast out. That serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world was cast to the earth. And his angels were cast out with him."*

Those verses from Rev. 12:7-9 tell about a war that broke out in heaven when Michael called *"the archangel"*, and his angels, fought against the dragon Satan. The dragon and *his* angels fought back. The Hebrew name *Miyka'el* used here is translated as a question: *"who is like God?"* In Scripture, Michael defends holiness and all that is good. Verse 7 calls Satan *"the dragon."* And in verse 9 Satan is the architect of evil. He's everything that is opposed to God. Ephesians 2:2 refers to Satan as *"the prince of the power of the air."* You can understand why conflict between Michael and Satan broke out in heaven. And that conflict between good and evil continues today as Satan attacks believers. Christians are warned to be sober, vigilant, watchful, alert, well balanced and self-disciplined.

According to 1 Peter 5:8, the devil is the enemy who walks, and prowls, and goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour or eat. The Devil uses suffering and temptation to cause believers to become spiritually ineffective. In 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul mentioned *"a thorn in his flesh"*. He asked the Lord to remove it, but the Lord said His grace was sufficient for him. There are different theories as to what exactly was the *"thorn in his flesh."* Some say it was a messenger of Satan sent to persecute him. Others say it was a disease. An eye condition. Maybe a temptation. A speech impediment. Or something else. But it was some kind of *severe personal trial* he called *"a messenger of Satan."*

And Ephesians 6:10-12 reminds us that we all are engaged in a vicious warfare with the Devil and his demonic followers. *"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*

Now, back to our lesson. Who was Jesus? He asked that question of His closest followers. He asked them, *"Who do others say I am?"* They told Him that some say You are the Christ. Others say You are a teacher. A prophet. Some thought He was a devil. Then He asked them a point blank; *"Who do YOU say I am?"* It was the Apostle Peter who answered what every Christian ought to be able to say immediately; *"You are the Christ, Son of the living God."* Those who accepted Jesus, accepted Him as the Son of the living God, and lived according to His teachings. They followed Him, just as sheep follow their shepherd wherever he leads them and will do whatever he directs them to do. Sheep recognize their shepherd's voice. They responded by following him. And that's the way you should live! Listening to what Jesus your Shepherd says to you. And being willing to follow Him.

One of the Shepherd's great statements was one you need to listen to very carefully. It's this: *"I am the gate."* To understand what He meant by that, you must visualize a sheep pen made of piled up rocks on a hilly Palestine countryside, built as a safe place for sheep to stay at night. When the sun set, the shepherd and his sheep were usually far away from their village. The shepherd would gather his sheep into an area enclosed by a stone wall that had only one opening. No gate! And since there was no gate, the sheep were kept safe and secure by the shepherd. He literally laid across the narrow opening making himself become the gate – the door to the sheep. No way wolves could get in! And there was no way for the sheep to get out. So, in the most literal sense, the shepherd was the door for the sheep. There was no access to the sheep pen, except through the shepherd who guarded the entrance.

No doubt, that's what Jesus was thinking when He said, *"I am the door."* It's through Me, and Me alone, that you gain access to God. It's a one-way *"street."* Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could just live your life all day long with no fear of harm? It can happen, if you're one of the Good Shepherd's sheep and you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Your Shepherd! In the Book of Deuteronomy, it's the one who is obedient to God who is blessed when coming, and when going out. In Psalm 28:9, David said he was certain God, our Great Shepherd, would keep those who belong to Him as they go in, and as they go out. *"Save your people! Bless Israel, your special possession. Lead them like a shepherd and carry them in your arms forever."*

Once you discover Jesus is your Good Shepherd, and that He's your safety and security, He will protect you. If you know your life is in God's hands, who loves and cares about you, there's no need to be afraid of what tomorrow brings. And the way you discover the greatness, and the grace of God is through God's Son, Jesus Christ. When Jesus described Himself as the entrance into the sheepfold, it was for those who belong to God. Those who had committed their lives to Jesus by faith. Those who were in a personal relationship with Him as the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep.

It happened on a cross. On Golgotha's Hill outside Jerusalem. Jesus warned there would be imposters who would come after Him. They would try to get His sheep to follow *them*. Satan has always used false prophets to try to persuade folks that their ministry is equal to, or greater than Jesus.' But those "phonies," without a doubt, try to lead unsuspecting followers in the wrong direction. Away from God. Down the path to spiritual death and personal destruction. It's the highway to Hell! False prophets talk about prosperity. They teach personal meditation. They tell you to become self-reliant. Not dependent on God!

A false prophet falsely claims the gift of prophecy. Or divine inspiration. Or speaking for God. And who makes such claims? Think back to the Israelite kingdom just before the Babylonian invasion. False prophets told the Jews if they would just rely on the Egyptian army, they would defeat Babylon. That didn't happen! They rejected God. And went into exile in Babylon for 40 years!

Whenever you face what seems like a false prophet, compare the words they're saying with Scripture. It doesn't matter if they claim to have divine visions. They may appear to be healing others. Or performing miracles. But if their message doesn't agree with God's Message, you must reject their false teachings. False prophets target you when you are most vulnerable. You need money to pay a debt that's overdue. You're sick and can't pay the doctor or hospital. They'll show you how to get it! They're like wolves outside the sheepfold. The world's a scary place. You're looking for protection. That's when a deceiver will appear on the scene with temptation. As the End of Days approach, stay vigilant. Scripture says many false prophets will arise during these times. But if you remain in the sheepfold of God, you will be safe.

Listen again to what Jesus said. ²*The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.* ³*The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* ⁴*When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.* ⁵*But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."* . . . ⁷*Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.* ⁸*All who have come before Me are thieves and robbers. But the sheep have not listened to them.* ⁹*I am the gate! Whoever enters through Me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture.* ¹⁰*The thief comes only to steal and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* . . . "I am the gate. Whoever enters through Me will be saved." AMEN