

A landscape photograph featuring rolling hills in the background under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The foreground is filled with a field of tall, golden-brown grass. A semi-transparent yellow rectangular box is positioned in the lower right area of the image, containing text.

John's Gospel - Chapter 10

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# Who and What is the Good Shepherd?

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# There is a Good Shepherd

Jesus is the Good Shepherd to whom all other shepherds pointed in the Old Testament by bringing his people to God, sacrificing for them to thrive, and knowing them intimately.

The shepherd motif is a rich theme that runs throughout all of Scripture. When Jacob gives his blessing to each of his 12 sons in Genesis 48, he refers to God as his shepherd. “And he blessed Joseph and said, ‘The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.’”<sup>1</sup> In Numbers 27, God has Moses appoint Joshua to lead his people into the Promised Land as a shepherd that will lead “in and out” to find great pasture. Finally in Psalm 23 King

David, once a literal shepherd and the figurative shepherd of God’s people, said that the Lord restores his soul as a shepherd leads his flock by quiet waters.

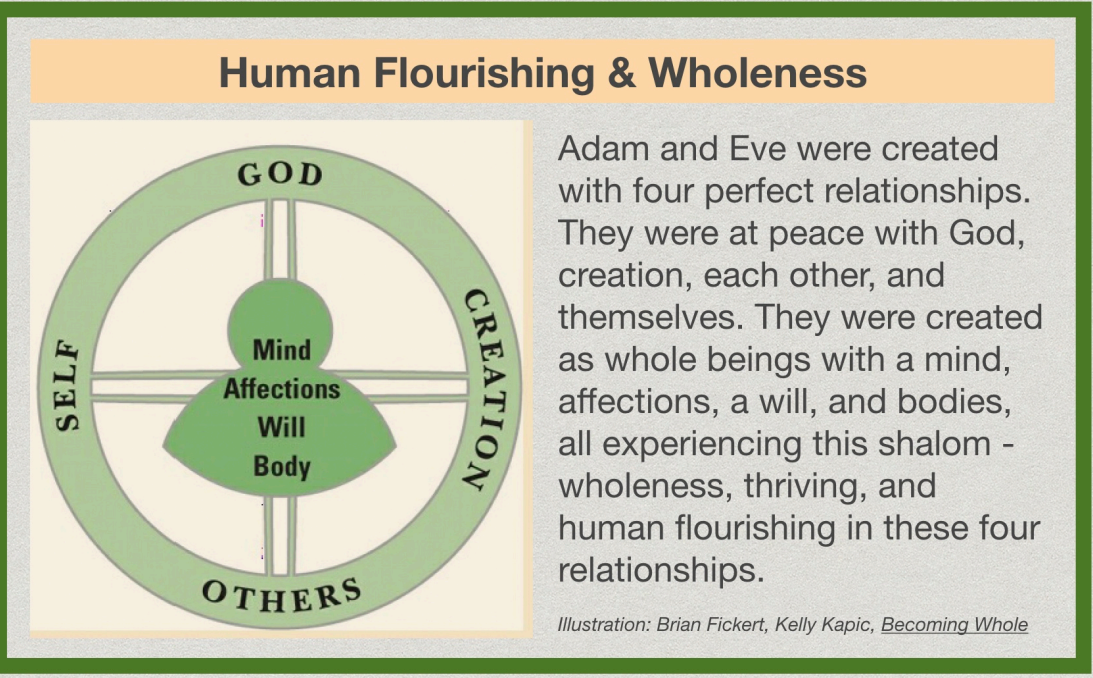
During the exile period, many of the leaders of Israel were wicked and selfish shepherds. In Ezekiel 34 the shepherds who feed themselves are not servant-leaders pouring their lives out for the sheep’s thriving. But in the same passage, Ezekiel prophesies that one day the ultimate Shepherd in David’s line will come, and he will bring ultimate shalom and human thriving to his people. Whether good or bad, shepherds are leaders that either point to Jesus by contrast in what Jesus would never do or by dim reflection. If David was a good shepherd, how much better will Christ *the* shepherd be?

The restoration of all things is prophesied in the Old Testament in terms of a shepherd and his sheep. In the future material, new heavens and new earth, Ezekiel says that God’s people will dwell in rich land where wild beasts will be removed. Many pastoral terms are used to describe the new world in Ezekiel 34. God’s own people will no longer be prey as unprotected sheep in the wilderness, but rather in God’s own words he says, “you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.”



In God’s revelation of himself during the history of mankind, there was creation, fall, and redemption. But the story does not stop there. As good as being made right with God through Christ is presently, there will be complete Restoration when one day the great Shepherd will lead his people to *the* pasture of endless human flourishing (see Figures 1 & 6). We can have real hope today in the fact that we will be restored perfectly and fully to

Figure 1



God, creation, and others, and also to ourselves in mind, affections, will and body.<sup>2</sup> That is what human flourishing is. On this side of the cross, the gospel is doing that work now. Through this gospel we experience human flourishing now, and one day it will fully be done when we are truly home.

The great “Good Shepherd passage” is found in chapter 10 of John’s gospel. Jesus connects himself to this long Old Testament motif of the shepherd. This is not a new or standalone story in John’s gospel. This passage continues the same event with the same audience from chapter 9 when Jesus restores sight to the man born blind. Jesus argues that he is *the* Good Shepherd by his work in the healing of this blind man and other signs. Shepherds

preserve the owner’s sheep.

John is a masterfully written gospel that is written in a style completely different from the other three gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Whereas these three gospels are much more linear, John is like a mosaic or picture from a few, key events and dialogues in Jesus’ life. John picks a handful of specific events to make one point. But what is that one point? In chapter 20 John writes, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John wants his readers to see what a thriving life looks like and how it can be obtained.

So what events does John select? John selects for his book seven “I am” statements that Jesus said during his ministry, one of the Old Testament names for God himself (see Figure 2).

He also chooses only seven miracles of the many that Jesus did, and for each miracle he has seven discourse passages explaining the sign behind each miracle. The healing of the blind man in chapter 9 is number six of the seven miracles chosen for the book. This Good Shepherd

passage in John 10 is number six of the seven discourses explaining the miracles (see Figure 3). This passage also contains numbers three and four of the seven “I Am” statements. Why? Why does John weave together his book with 21 items like this - 7 miracles, 7 discourses, 7 “I Am” statements? So we may believe. And by believing experience true human flourishing now and complete restoration one day.

**Jesus is God: Seven “I Am” statements in John’s gospel**

Christ uses God's name “Yahweh” to refer to himself (Exodus 3:14).

1. I Am the bread of life - John 6:35.
2. I Am the light of the world - 8:12.
3. I Am the gate - 10:9.
4. I Am the good shepherd - 10:11.
5. I Am the resurrection and the life - 11:25.
6. I Am the way, the truth, and the life - 14:6.
7. I Am the true vine, and my father is the gardener - 15:1.

Quest for Hope - New Testament “Promises Kept” Study by Eric Blick based on Pastor Mark Dever’s class notes, Capitol Hill Baptist Church



# Psalm 23

## A Psalm of David, a shepherd-king

- ▶ The LORD is my shepherd;
- ▶ I shall not want.
- ▶ He makes me lie down in green pastures.
- ▶ He leads me beside still waters.
- ▶ He restores my soul.
- ▶ He leads 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 mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
- ▶ and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.



**The prophetic remedy for bad shepherds is for God to place his shepherd from David’s lineage.** Ezekiel 34:11 says, "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness." In John 10 Jesus is quoted saying this is he.

Figure 3

John’s Seven Pairs: Miracles (M) as Signs explained in Discourses (D)				
Miracle / Discourse		Chapter	Event	Explanation of the Main Point
1	M	2	Water to wine	Both make the point that Jesus is the one who brings in the blessings of the New Covenant. The new wine of the kingdom is brought in as the one who is the New Temple arrives.
1	D	2	Clearing the temple	
2	D	4	Woman at the well	Both make the point that the work and worship of the Lord is not geographically located but centered around faith in Jesus.
2	M	4	Healing of official’s son	
3	M	5	Healing on the Sabbath	Both making the point that Jesus is his Father’s Son, and so he does the good work that his father does, even on the Sabbath.
3	D	5	Conversation with the Jews	
4	M	6	Feeding of the 5,000	Both show that Jesus is the only source of life through his death.
4	D	6	Bread of Life Discourse	
5	M	6	Walking on water	Jesus is the one who gives spiritual sight, for he is the light of the world.
5	D	8-9	Light of the World	
6	M	9	Healing of the man born blind	Jesus is the one who brings whole-being restoration for human thriving because he is the ultimate Joshua to shepherd his people “in and out to find great pasture.”
6	D	8	Good Shepherd	
7	M	11	Raising of Lazarus	Both make the point that Jesus is the one who brings resurrection and life. It is through Jesus’ death and resurrection that the disciples will be given a way to the Father, filled with joy, given the Spirit, and commissioned to spread the gospel.
7	D	14-21	Farewell discourse & Passion narrative	

Source: Quest for Hope - New Testament “Promises Kept” Study by Eric Blick based on Pastor Mark Dever’s class notes, Capitol Hill Baptist Church



Summary of the five sections or “Scenes”

There are five grammatical breaks in this passage that are like five scenes in a movie or five acts in a play. The “Outline - Flow of the Argument” graphic summarizes the five “scenes” of this great “movie” of the Good Shepherd passage (see Figure 4).

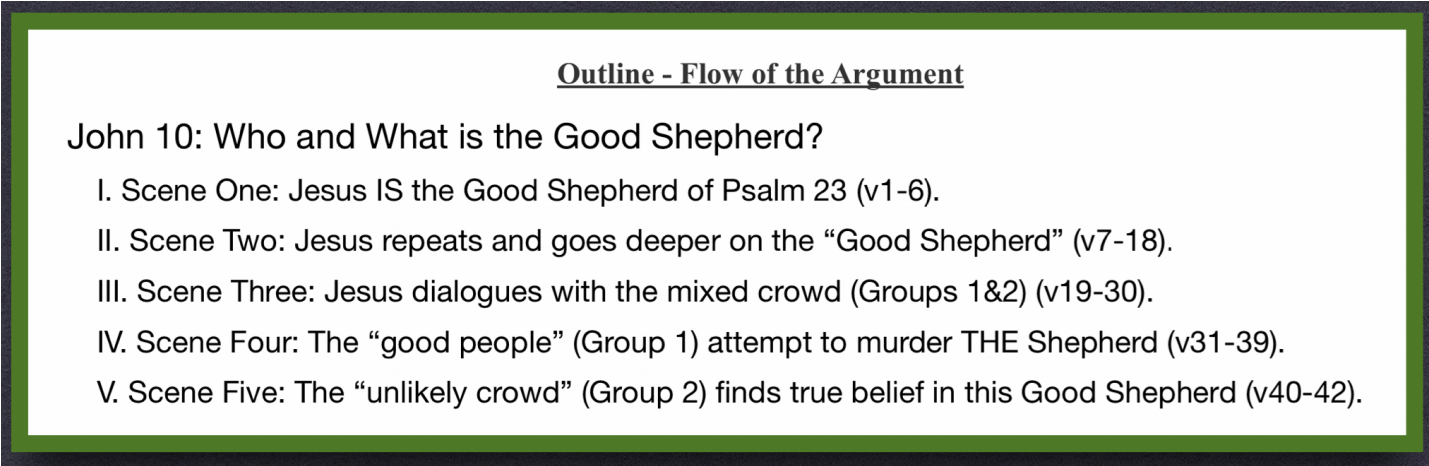
Scene One

Jesus having just healed a blind man to human flourishing says he is the great Shepherd who will bring total restoration to his own, body and soul to our Maker. Why heal a blind man who will eventually die? Why raise Lazarus from the dead in the very next chapter in John just to die later in his life again? The Good Shepherd is demonstrating the type of complete restoration in the Kingdom of God that will be when it is fully completed one day. We will have total “shalom”, the Jewish word for peace and wholeness in all areas. Through the gospel, we see this shalom breaking into the scene now bringing restoration and giving us a foretaste of its future completion.

Jesus not only makes worshipers of God but

cares for them physically as well. Jesus gives words to this in the shepherd motif providing us a vivid picture of what he will perfectly do one day for all his own when the new earth and heavens are

Figure 4

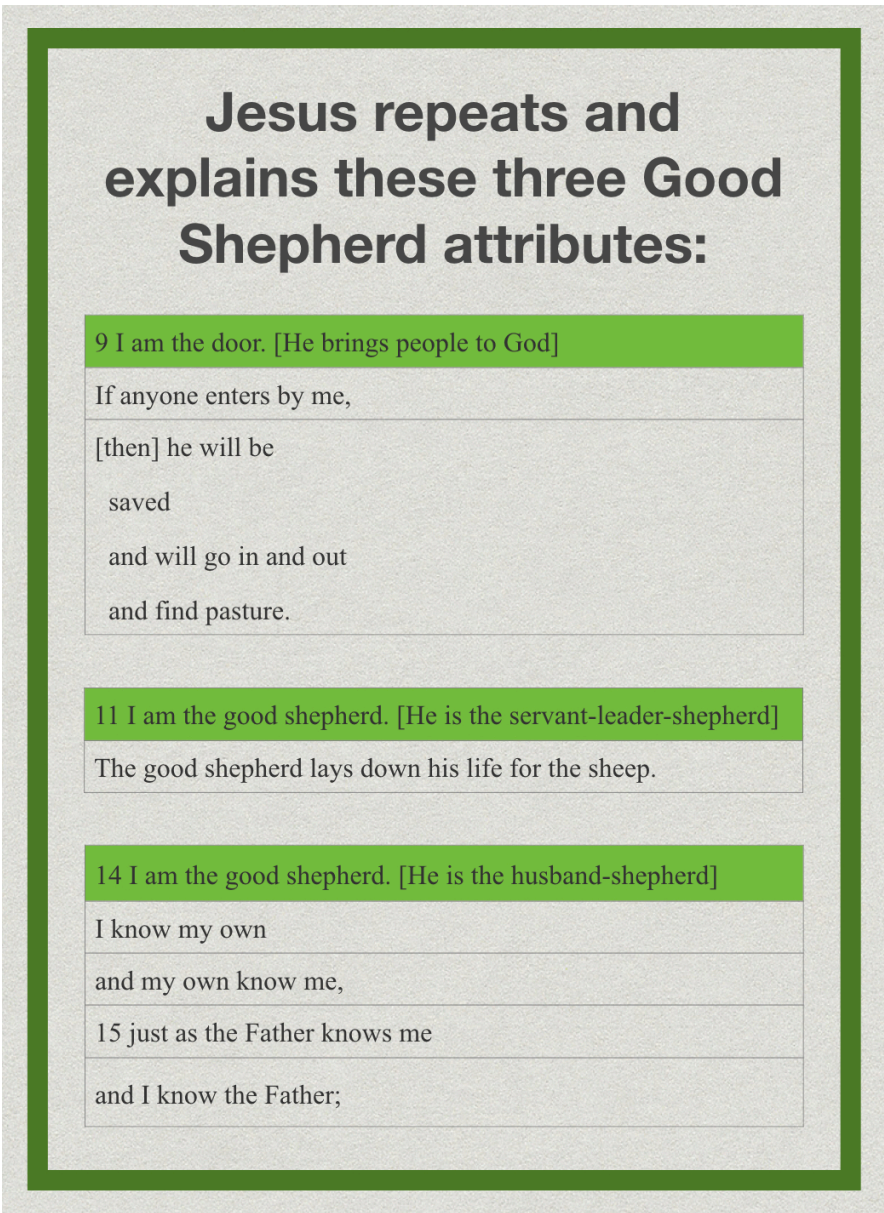


restored. Scene One ends with Jesus sensing that the people do not fully understand what he just said about being *the* Good Shepherd. They are not fully seeing the connection he is making that he is *the* Shepherd who restores not only the blind to sight but one day the entire world to full human flourishing. What the first Adam failed to do, namely make the whole world like the Garden of Eden, the second Adam is completing.

Scene Two

Jesus repeats again the exact same three truths he just conveyed that the Good Shepherd is for his own. What three truths? I missed them in many quick reading of the passage for years. When you use the study method referred to as “arc-ing” to reflect on this passage, it jumps off the page (see Figure 5). The “speech” Jesus gives in Scene One has the exact same three points that he uses again in Scene Two but in even more detail.

Figure 5





# What does the Good Shepherd do?

## The Selfless Leader



### Jesus opens the Door for the sheep:

He is the only opening to personally talk with God. Not only does Jesus lead people to the Gatekeeper, but he is the only Door to see him.



### Jesus leads as the Servant-Leader-Shepherd:

At great expense to himself the sheep thrive. Not only does Jesus as the servant-leader bring out all his own to good pasture (v4), but he is only able to accomplish this by his death for them because of the Father's charge given to him (v11).



### Jesus knows his own as THE "Husband-Shepherd":

He has intimate two-way dialogue with them that exists between the Trinity. Not only do the sheep listen to their names being called by the shepherd and obey (v3b), but there is two-way dialogue in the same fashion as the Godhead communicates with one another.



# Who is the Good Shepherd?

Jesus



**Like-Greater than:** Joshua was a good shepherd who led God's people into the Promised Land.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us to thriving now and one day full restoration in the Promised Land of the new heavens and earth.



**Contrast from failure to perfection:** Through Ezekiel, God condemned Israel's leaders during exile as wicked, selfish shepherds.

These leaders fled danger like hired hands, but, in contrast, Jesus dies so his sheep can live and have life to the full.



**Good to Greater:** Moses was good at telling the people what God said. Psalm 82 says this role was a son and a god, to bring the word of God.

Jesus is THE Word from God as THE Son and THE God.





What is it that Jesus is trying to say about the Good Shepherd in this speech that he repeats two times? Jesus is trying to convey three truths about who he is as a shepherd: He is the door, the servant leader, and the husband. As THE “door”, he is the only way to fellowship with the perfect, holy, creator God who owns the “sheep pen”. As the servant-leader who owns the sheep, he shepherds his people for their thriving at great expense to himself. This is unlike the “hired-hand” who flees for his own safety leaving the sheep in danger. As the “husband-shepherd”, he has an intimate, two-way relationship with each of his sheep that he references is like the closeness between the Godhead in the Trinity.

Jesus is brining life to the spiritually dead and physically empty. This life is real, and “the greater progress that any man makes in faith, the more nearly does he approach to fullness of life, because the Spirit, who is life, grows in him.”<sup>3</sup> This Shepherd offers real hope. He offers real life and life abundantly for his own. How does he do that? He is the door to know God richly, he is the servant-leader, and the husband-shepherd.



### Scene Three

John then shows how two different groups of people respond to this three-fold truth about Jesus as Shepherd. After hearing now two times the same three truths about WHAT the Good Shepherd does, the two groups in the crowd each respond differently. They each have a question. Group One in the crowd, including the Pharisees who condemned the blind man for being healed on the Sabbath in chapter 9, respond to the Good Shepherd monologue with, “Why listen to this man, he must have a demon.” They, in essence, “are asking a question not to believe but to trap which shows Jesus’ response to be true - they are not his sheep. The Jews’ demand in 10:24, ‘If you are the Christ, tell us plainly,’ seems disingenuous: if they

had not understood him to claim to be the Messiah, why did they repeatedly try to kill him (5:18, 7:25, etc.)?”<sup>4</sup> In patience, Jesus answers them again anyway.

Group Two in this crowd says there is no way Jesus has a demon. Their question is when have demons ever made a blind man see? Until this time, no blind person in the history of mankind has ever received their sight back. Jesus lovingly and shrewdly addresses their questions.

### Scene Four

John shows how Group One in the crowd, the Pharisees, resolves their questions to an answer of murder. This is Jesus’ second time he answers their question: “tell us plainly, are you the Christ?” He

has already plainly told them that he is. Jesus responds to their anger with a question. He asks for which miracle and good work is he on this “mock-trial” to be killed? They say it is for blasphemy. Jesus quotes Psalm 82 and says Old Testament leaders were called “gods” and “sons of

God” when they were set apart to bring God’s words. They were not called blasphemers. He is in that same category, and he fulfills it - he is *the* word from God (John 1). Jesus uses a logical argument that “follows the lines of a syllogism that may be expressed as follows: major premise - Scripture cannot be broken; minor premise - Scripture calls human beings to whom God’s word came ‘gods’; conclusion - there is nothing inherently blasphemous in Jesus referring to himself as ‘Son of God’”.<sup>5</sup> He argues, however, to many deaf ears whose minds are already made up. Jesus tells them to believe his miracles which prove he is from God. They instead try to murder him right there. He escapes.

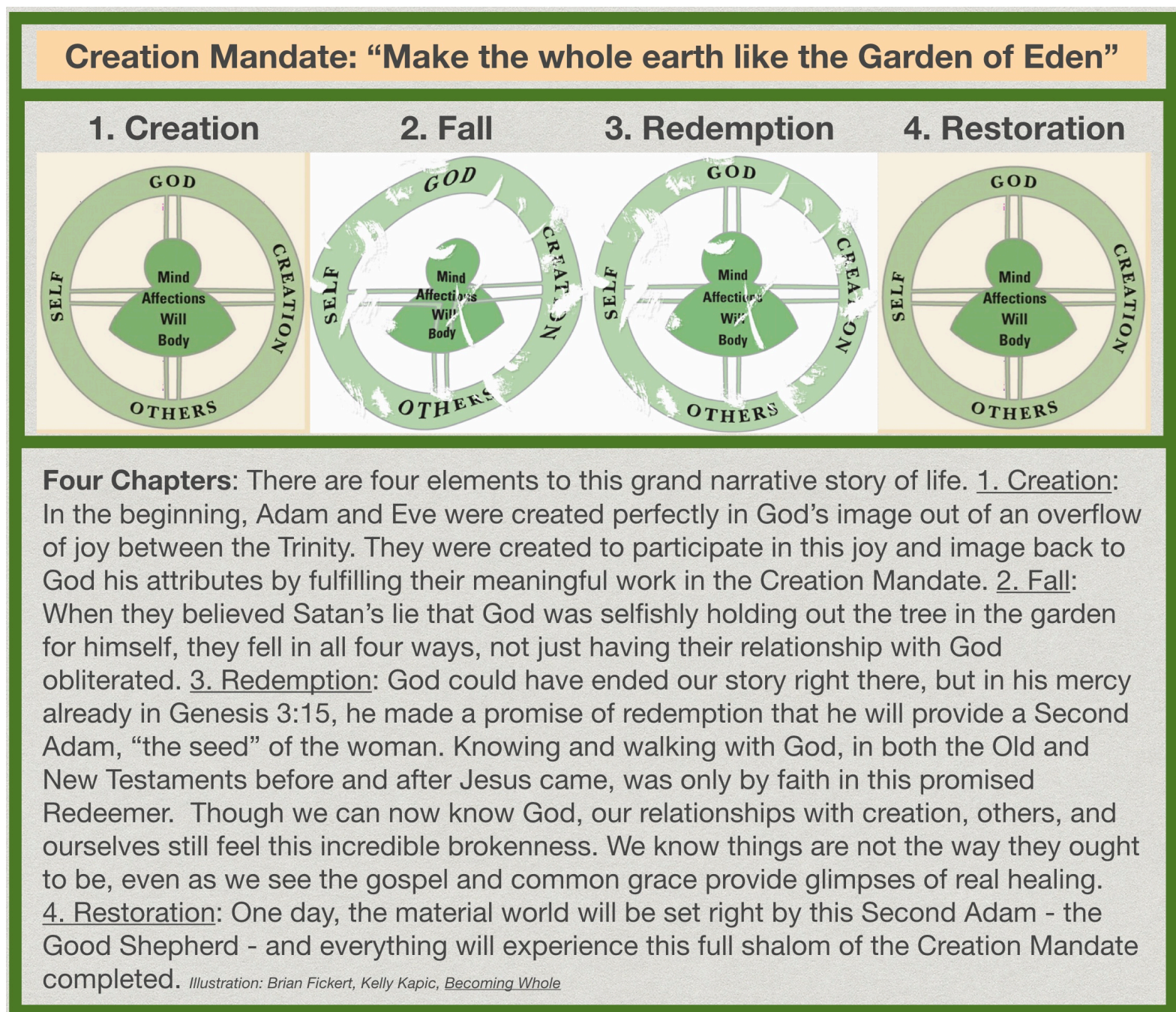
Group One refuses to see Jesus’ works as signs which are miracles with a deeper message. Jesus



# The Good Shepherd is the Second Adam



Figure 6





is not performing tasks that are humanly impossible in order to only display his power. He is doing each miracle for a reason, to proclaim a message. In John 2, for instance, he is not just demonstrating he can cure bad wedding planning when the wine runs out by turning some pots of water to wine. John chooses this as the first miracle recounted in his gospel and calls it a sign. What was the sign? What was the message? Jesus brings celebration: he alone purifies his people for a material banquet of celebration that will be shared one day together in the new heavens and earth. The healing of the man born blind in John 9 sends a message too: Jesus provides “going in and out to find great pasture” which includes whole-being restoration and shalom with God, self, others, and creation. Not only does Group One refuse to see these miracles as authenticating Jesus’ mission from God, but they also miss the clear message or sign behind each miracle.

## Scene Five

Now we are at story’s climax in Scene Five. Group Two of this crowd has seen and heard all this unfold, and they respond in belief. They receive this human flourishing with and from their Maker. Verse 40 is surprising to me with how it is worded: “[Jesus] went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. And many came to him. And they said, ‘John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.’ And many believed in him there.” John did not do miracles with signs like Jesus, but many heard his message

(see Figure 7). What began in chapter 1 with them hearing John the Baptist speak, then in chapter 9 with Jesus healing the blind man, chapter 10 with Jesus saying he is THE Shepherd of God’s own sheep, now ends with people deciding to believe that Jesus *is* the Messiah. They believe Jesus is the Shepherd foretold in the Old Testament, the Son of God. Group Two illustrates the main point of John’s book: they see the signs behind the miracles and believe! They have real life now and complete human flourishing one day.

As we read this today, John is whispering to us one message. At the climax of this passage the message to us from

John is, “So, do you believe?” Weigh the evidence like these people who wondered about Jesus as they traveled around and



watched him speak and perform unheard of miracles. Consider what he is offering: true human flourishing, shalom and putting all things right. Behold this unique King who comes not demanding a new order as a tyrant, but behold this Shepherd, the lover of your soul for whom you were made. Or pick up rocks to stone him, but you can’t just say he was a good man. He is either who he said he was - the Savior - or a huge liar.<sup>6</sup> Come, see who this shepherd really is. You can really be satisfied now, finding rich, safe pasture to go in and out and thrive. Believe for your joy.

## Is there another scene to this story?

Figure 7

**Connecting the dots to belief - verse 41:** Hearing John the Baptist’s true words then seeing Jesus’ miraculous signs yielded belief.

Six truths that the two groups of people in John 10 word have heard John the Baptist say about Jesus:

1. Jesus is the light, and John testifies about the light - John 1:6-7.
2. Jesus is THE prophet of God to explain God to us, and John is A prophet - 1:15, 21.
3. Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, and John baptizes with water - 1:26-27, 34.
4. Jesus has greater glory than John’s achieved fame - John 1:26-27
5. Jesus is THE lamb of God who takes away sin, and John proclaims him - 1:29.
6. Jesus is God, and John is a man called to testify to that fact - 1:34.

Is Scene Five the end of this story?

We see how it ends for Group Two who believes, but how does the story end for Group One those who do not believe? Is there a Scene Six later, as it were, to tell us what happens to Group One, the Pharisees? When we “pull back the lens” in the gospels, we see that God loves ungrateful, lost, “older



brothers” as much as he loves rebellious “younger bothers.” That is what we learn from Luke’s retelling of the Prodigal Son parable. The punchline is that both sons are lost. Both sons need to be saved, not just the one who leaves home to squander his father’s inheritance.

Tim Keller in his book The Prodigal God makes the point that there are two ways to be lost. You can be lost by being really, really bad or by being really, really good. The older brother stays home obeying all the rules, but does not want the father for the

father’s sake. He also just wants the father’s money. His plan to get it is not by being in close relationship with the father but by earning it in obeying all the rules. It has been said that the older, “bitter son is farther from home there in the field than the prodigal was in the pigpen. He has no love for his father.”<sup>7</sup> He was “lost” at home.

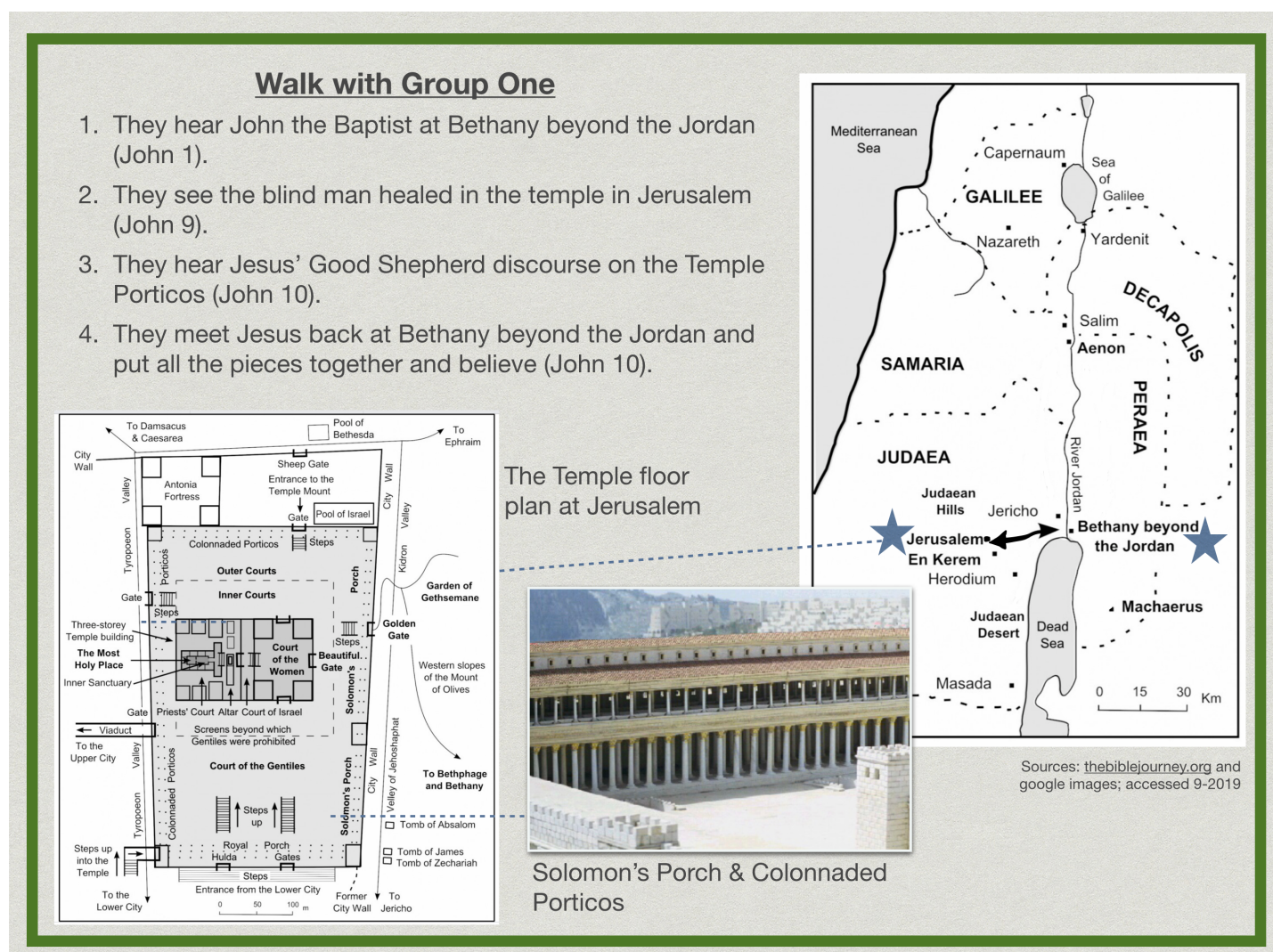
He is jealous when his younger brother returns and gets what amounts to a second inheritance. This parable ends, however, with the father leaving the return celebration party for the younger son to go find his older son in the field to remind him just how much he loves him. He invites him to this celebration too, illustrating the invitation for complete restoration of shalom for the older brother too.

The parable of the prodigal son is probably a misnomer. Tim Keller argues that “the word ‘prodigal’ does not mean “wayward” but, according to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary,

‘recklessly spendthrift.’ It means to spend until you have nothing left... Jesus is showing us the God of Great Expenditure, who is nothing if not prodigal toward us, his children. God’s reckless grace is our greatest hope, a life-changing experience, and the subject of this book.”<sup>8</sup> God has a passion to pursue both younger and older brothers.

What does the Prodigal Son parable from Luke’s gospel have to do with Jesus healing a blind man and launching into the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10? If it is true that God loves the “older

Figure 8



brother” too, then maybe there is Scene Six for them?

Look at what the geography tells us about this Good Shepherd passage (see Figure 8). In verses 40-45 we learn that Group Two, those who believe, go back to where their story started. Trace their events on a map: they had encountered John the Baptist who baptized people at Bethany beyond the Jordan in John 1, about 15 miles east of Jerusalem. They listened to John the Baptist say many key truths about this Messiah that was coming. Then we know from verse 21 that they



were in the Temple in Jerusalem to watch Jesus heal the blind man in John 9. Then they move outside the Temple to Solomon's portico where they listen to the Good Shepherd discourse from Jesus. Then in Scene Five John says that they returned beyond the Jordan River and put the pieces together. The dots finally connected for them from what John the Baptist said along with the miracle that they watched Jesus perform, and THEN they believed.



Interestingly enough, the Pharisees were also at every one of these same events.

John 1 says the Pharisees went out to Bethany beyond the Jordan to see this John the Baptist and refute his teaching. They rebuked the healed blind man in the temple in Jerusalem. They moved out to Solomon's portico and picked up stones to kill the Good Shepherd. They saw and heard the same events, and instead of responding in belief like Group Two, their hearts grew more wicked in murderous intent. They are not mentioned at all in Scene Five. They are missing. They do not go back out to Bethany. We last see them on Solomon's Portico with rocks in hand to kill Jesus while he eludes their grasp escaping.

BUT, God loves older brothers. Only a few weeks later, Jesus has been killed by people in Group One or identify with them. Jesus is risen from the dead and returns to the Father. The storyline is picked up again in Acts where Peter preaches at the same Solomon's Portico as Jesus did in John 10:23. It is likely that people from Group One, including the Pharisees, are present, because Peter says they are the ones that killed Jesus. Luke recounts the story of Peter speaking, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know- this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men... Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And

Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit... So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls' (Acts 2:37-41). There was a Scene Six for many in Group One. They believed at the same location where just weeks ago they stood with rocks to kill Jesus.

## Conclusion

The Father loves both older and younger brothers, those in Group One AND those in Group Two. This demonstrates the God of Love not giving up on people but pursuing them in kindness. The truth is we have both older brother and younger brother in each of us. The good news is that the Father pursues us in love. We see Group One believe. We see many in Group Two believe. What about you, will you believe? Will you follow this Shepherd who is the way to peaceful fellowship with God, who is the servant-leader providing complete human thriving, and who is the shepherd-husband who offers complete understanding and intimacy?

Come, believe.

### **Eric Blick, November 2019**

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### **End notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> ESV Study Bible (Illinois: Crossway Publishers, 2008), used for all scripture quotations.
- <sup>2</sup> Brian Fickert, Kelly Kapic, Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn't the American Dream (Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2019), 50.
- <sup>3</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John Volume 1 (Michigan: Baker Book House, 2005), p402.
- <sup>4</sup> G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2007), 464.
- <sup>5</sup> Beale, 465.
- <sup>6</sup> John Piper, "Liar, Lunatic, Lord: Why I Love the Apostle Paul." <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/liar-lunatic-or-reliable> (last accessed 11/11/19).
- <sup>7</sup> Edmund Clowney, Preaching Christ in All of Scripture (Illinois: Crossway Publishers, 2003), 11x.
- <sup>8</sup> Timothy Keller, The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), location 143 Kindle edition.