

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

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**Speaker:** Mr. Paul Thomson

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## The Old is in the New Revealed: The Shepherd

Good morning and thank you for tuning in to *Truth for Today* to hear this morning's talk.

The subject we have before us today is "The Shepherd". We will see as we take a look at some of the Old Testament shepherds, how the Holy Spirit would point us forward in type (or picture) to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recently I have been taking a small series of talks on "Shepherds in the Bible" and it has been really interesting to see just how many shepherds there are in the Bible, both men and women. They seem to have a very important role in the Bible and this is highlighted when God chose to reveal to shepherds that The Saviour was to be born, Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-20)

Being a shepherd in Bible times was much different to being a shepherd in Britain today. The shepherd was always with his sheep; he led them from the front with no sheepdog or quad bike to help him! He had to find food and water for his sheep in those dry desert lands. He had to look after the safety of the sheep; there were lots of wild animals that would kill the sheep, dangerous places where they may lose their footing and get trapped. The shepherd had a crook, which would be used for poking into holes and crevices in caves to ensure there were no snakes or scorpions that would be a danger to the sheep. He would also use it to keep the sheep in order. He would sleep in front of the fold at night to protect his sheep from any attack. The shepherd's whole life was caring for his sheep; he knew each one by name and their individual characters; he was always with them, morning, noon and night. The shepherd was well known and trusted by the sheep, his voice they would know very well.

The Bible also refers to hired shepherds who might not look after the sheep just as well as a shepherd who was looking after his own sheep. (John 10:13) He would not have the same bond with them, or love for them as they were not "his own".

Sheep would be used for food, clothing and for the many sacrifices that had to be made under Jewish law. Sheep are quite helpless animals, if they fall on their backs they can't get back on their feet; if one runs off the whole flock would follow. The sheep were totally dependent upon the shepherd in every way.

Now that we have set in our minds the role of the shepherd, let us look at some of the shepherds in the Old Testament.

### David

We will begin with David. We need to turn in our Bibles to 1 Samuel 16, where the story of David begins. After the LORD had rejected King Saul, Samuel was sent by the LORD to Jesse the Beth-lehemite to anoint the next King of Israel from one of his sons. The sons were all paraded before Samuel and he told Jesse that the LORD had not chosen any of them. He then asked Jesse if that was all of his children. Jesse replied that he had another son, his youngest, who was looking after the sheep. Samuel said, "Send for him". When David arrived fresh from the field he had a ruddy complexion, with a fine appearance and handsome features. The LORD tells Samuel to arise and anoint him because he was the chosen one. 2 Samuel 7:8 tells us that David was taken from the pasture and from the sheep to rule over the LORD's people Israel. So David was the king in waiting. It is remarkable to me, the humble way he served King Saul, as many times he was called to the palace to play his harp for him. David was also an obedient son to his father by again returning from the palace, to feed his father's sheep in Bethlehem as we read in 1 Samuel 17:15.

Can you see the beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus here? We see Him, the Lord of all, the chosen One, the future anointed King of glory, as the perfect, humble, willing and obedient Servant, coming into this world, laying aside His glory, "being made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death". (Hebrews 2:9) The Lord Jesus was ready to complete the work His Father had given Him to do: that great work of redemption at the cross of Calvary. He was obedient unto death even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8) Before ever the Lord Jesus came into our world, we learn from Proverbs 8:31, that even in the palaces of eternity "[His] delights were with the sons of men". He showed His love for us, the sheep, by coming in flesh and living amongst us, to show us God's wonderful heart of love.

David on many instances could have easily taken a higher position by declaring that he was to be the future King of Israel, but David had a wonderful character which each one of us should look to emulate today. He was asked by his father in 1 Samuel 17 to take some food to his brothers and to the captain of the guard to see how they were doing and to bring him a report. He rose early without any delay and went as his father had commanded him. We see in 1 Samuel 17:20 that David always made sure that, when he left his sheep, someone was looking after them and when he arrived at the battlefield, he never abandoned his carriage but left it with the keeper. Everything was in order and was taken care of - no one could point the finger at him. But they did - his older brother, Eliab, was angry with him when he arrived and accused him of leaving the sheep without a keeper. He also accused him of pride and having a wicked heart. David never argued, but he knew that there was a purpose in him being there.

Once more we see the Lord Jesus in the New Testament when He suffered ridicule from His own people the Jews. He was rejected, hated and accused of many things but because of who He was, the sinless Holy Son of God, He did not have to answer anyone. The Lord had a great work ahead of Him - the work that His Father had sent Him to do, the work of the Cross.

David soon learnt that that fear gripped the camp because of a great giant called Goliath, who was challenging the Israelites to fight him. David, the willing servant, volunteered to fight him. Saul told him that he was too young and had no experience in war. David told him how he protected his father's sheep. He told him of a time when a lion and a bear took lambs from the flock, and how he had saved the lambs from their mouths and killed them both. Saul offered him his armour but David refused because he knew that it was only his God that would protect him. David always acknowledged that it was the LORD that had delivered him in the past, and it was in His strength that He would deliver the enemy of the Lord's people, Goliath, into his hand. We read in 1 Samuel 17:45 that "he came in the name of the LORD of hosts". David, in his eagerness, ran to face the enemy with only his sling in his hand and five smooth stones. He was able to use his skill with the sling, which he had used many times in the wilderness to protect the sheep, and defeated the giant.

What a picture of how the Lord Jesus went to the cross to defeat Satan and the power of death, so because of His death, we do not need to be afraid of death. He died, but He rose again, conquering death and today He is alive in Heaven. The Bible speaks of us having everlasting life once we have put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus. Because He lives, we live and we have a bright future ahead us, with Christ in heaven.

We also see in this picture the way that the Lord Jesus in His shepherd character would protect, care and provide for our every need in our lives. If we turn to Psalm 23 we see the LORD as my Shepherd, and that we should have everything we need in Him; the source of our supply comes from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. The verse that comes to mind is Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus". When the shepherd found the green pastures and the quiet waters, the sheep would have all that they required for sustenance; they could feed, rest and play together happily knowing that everything was well. It's a bit like us - we need to trust and rely upon our Shepherd. He knows what is best for us, He knows our needs and what we are like and how easily we can wander astray. He knows the dangers and the strength of the enemy. He would want us to walk in a path of righteousness, which would help to protect us from sin and danger. The sheep are also a reflection of their Shepherd. Are you a good reflection of your Shepherd?

## **Abel**

We have other shepherds in the Old Testament like Abel who is the first shepherd mentioned early in Genesis. Abel brought a lamb to God as a sacrifice which was acceptable to God. His brother Cain, when he saw his offering rejected, hated his brother and killed him. Surely we can see this picture pointing forward to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only acceptable sacrifice to God for sin. He was taken by His own brethren and nailed to the cross.

## **Joseph**

Another shepherd was Joseph. This is one of my favourite stories in the Bible - a great picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we start in Genesis 37 and scan through his life it can truly be said that we see "Christ in all the scriptures".

- He was loved by his father;
- He was sent by his father,
- He was hated and scorned by his brothers,
- His beautiful coat was stripped from him,
- He was put into a pit (a place of death),
- He was sold into Egypt,
- He was falsely accused in Potiphar's house,

- He was the saviour of Egypt,
- He was exalted to a high position - all had to bow the knee to Joseph, and
- His father was able to see his son's glory in Egypt.

What a wonderful story and what a great picture of our Lord Jesus. We can consider the Lord Jesus, the One who was obedient to His loving Father; obedient unto death "even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8), hated and rejected, sold by Judas, falsely accused by the High Priests and Pharisees, Saviour of sinners, exalted to the highest place. We read in Philippians that "God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). Pictures like this should bring a deeper, fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus and should help us to appreciate Him more. Oh that our hearts may be affected and overflow with praise and worship to Him.

Joseph never had to give up his life. Yes, he suffered greatly and so on, but the Lord Jesus had to pay the ultimate price by laying down His life. We need to turn now to the New Testament and to John 10, where we read of the Good Shepherd that gave His life for the sheep. (John 10:11) We learn there of the love of the Lord Jesus, giving His life for us so that we can be saved from our sins, so that we can have abundant life in Him. We also learn that He knows us individually, how that we hear His voice and should follow Him; how we have been given eternal life. We are also assured that we shall never perish once we have become one of His sheep; we will never be lost once we are saved. We have been given to the Lord Jesus by the Father; therefore we shall never be plucked from His hand. Some of you may struggle with this thought of maybe losing your salvation, but it is quite clear to me in these verses here that once, we are saved, we shall never be lost.

What a subject we have had before us today! It reminds me of a hymn:

*We'll sing of the Shepherd that died,  
That died for the sake of the flock;  
His love to the utmost was tried,  
But firmly endured as a rock.*

*Our song then forever shall be,  
Of the Shepherd who gave himself thus:  
No subject's so glorious as He,  
No theme so affecting to us.*

What a wonderful Shepherd we have! I want to finish with an incident in the life of the late JN Darby which is printed in a gospel tract called, "*The Kerry Shepherd Boy*". It illustrates to us the extent that the Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd went for us.

He was asked to visit a poor boy in a remote district in Ireland who was dying. After a long and tiring walk over hills and marshland, he arrived at a small cottage to find an old woman and a lad of about seventeen or eighteen years of age. The boy was suffering from exhaustion and had not long to live. Mr Darby tried to find out what the lad knew of God and what hope he had of salvation. The boy had heard of God and a coming judgement, but he had never been taught to read or write so learning of these things had not been possible. Mr Darby wondered how he could explain simply the message of salvation to this poor boy. Mr Darby asked him quietly how he had got this terrible cold. The boy went on to explain that one night last year, on a really terribly cold winter's night with snow on the ground, one of his father's sheep had gone astray and he was sent to look for it. They kept a few sheep in the mountains and that was their livelihood. He was so anxious to find his father's sheep that he stayed out all night until he had found the sheep that was lost. He found the sheep, which was exhausted. There was no way that it could have walked home itself, so he carried it home on his shoulders the next morning. There was rejoicing when he arrived home with the sheep, but the poor boy became dangerously ill and was never to recover from the cold he got that night saving the sheep.

After hearing the boy's story, Mr Darby was able to explain the whole Gospel story of the sheep being lost and the Father sending His Son to recover it. (Luke 15:1-7) The Son goes willingly, suffers without complaining, and in the end sacrifices His life to rescue the sheep. He read a few verses to the boy from Luke 15 and explained to the boy that he was the lost sheep and Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, who was sent by the Father to seek for him, and when He finds him He will carry him safely home. The boy accepted Christ as his Saviour; he prayed to be carried home like the lost sheep in the heavenly Shepherd's arms. He died peacefully but rejoicing with the name of the Lord Jesus, his Saviour and his Shepherd, upon his lips.

Dear listener, do you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and Shepherd? Have you put your faith and trust in Him? Why not this morning get on your knees and tell the Lord Jesus that you are a sinner and you want to be saved? Thank Him for shedding His blood for your sins on the cross at Calvary and ask Him to forgive you your sins and to

come into your life. You will then have the assurance that the Good Shepherd who gave His life for you, will care for you and will one day carry you home safely to the Father's house above.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, we pray that You will speak to the listeners today; that some may be encouraged in their faith, others may have a fuller appreciation of Christ and that some precious souls may come to know You as the Good Shepherd. We give thanks and ask Your blessing in your precious Name. Amen.

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