

# Chapter 17: Parable of the Good Shepherd

## Reading Outline:

- John 9-10
- 1. Jesus Heals a Blind Man on the Sabbath
- 2. Prophecies Referring to the Lord as the Shepherd
- 3. The Role of the Shepherd in Contrast with the Hireling
- 4. The Parable of the Good Shepherd
- 5. The Feast of Dedication
- 6. Jesus Goes to Bethabara in Perea
- 7. Conclusions

### **1. Jesus Heals a Blind Man on the Sabbath**

There were many blind men in Israel. Jesus had met many of them. Where there was sufficient faith, He had healed them. This event, however, is unique from the healings that preceded it. Its uniqueness is two-fold. The first is found in the question raised by His disciples regarding the source of the blindness, which infers their knowledge of a pre-mortal existence.

John 9:1-3

**1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.**

**2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?**

**3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.**

James E. Talmage states,

“The disciples’ question implied their belief in a state of moral agency and choice antedating mortality, else, how could they have thought of the man having sinned so as to bring upon himself congenital blindness? We are expressly told that he was born blind...The disciples evidently had been taught the great truth of an antemortal existence.”<sup>1</sup>

The second purpose for the healing of this man is “that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). In other words, this healing is different for it will serve as a witness to all of the healing power Jesus possessed physically as well as spiritually.

John 9:5

**5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**

Bruce R. McConkie clarifies,

“He is born thus for a purpose--so that I might heal him and he may stand forever as a witness that I am the Son of God...know this: I am the light of the world. Whenever, from this time forth, you remember that I opened these blind eyes, physically, remember also that I came to bring light to eyes, spiritually.”<sup>2</sup>

The giving of sight to a man born blind is unique in the history of the world as recorded in the writings of John with the additional insight provided by the Joseph Smith Translation.

John 9:32-33	JST, John 9:32-33
<b>32 Since the world began was it not heard than any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.</b>	<b>32 Since the world began was it not heard than any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind, <u>except he be of God.</u></b>
<b>33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.</b>	<b>33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.</b>

Jesus then proceeds to restore the young man’s eyesight.

John 9:6-7

**6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.  
7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.**

Why, one might reasonably ask, did Jesus go through the process of making clay of spittle and then applying it to the young man’s eyes. He must have clearly understood that His actions would be viewed by the Jewish authorities as yet another example of His disregard of the Sabbath.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Jesus deliberately [violates] the law of the Sabbath in two major respects: (1) He made clay, and (2) He applied a healing remedy to an impaired person, which of itself was forbidden, and in addition there was a specific prohibition against the application of saliva to the eyes on the Sabbath... [by his actions] Jesus was putting the people in the position of choosing between him as one sent of God to do the work of the Father, as one who can open blind eyes, and the traditions of the elders about Sabbath observance.”<sup>3</sup>

The man followed the instructions exactly and was rewarded with sight for the first time in his life. When others saw him, some believed, whereas others questioned if he was the man “that sat and begged?” (John 9:8). His witness to them was, “I am he” (John 9:9). The man is then “brought to the Pharisees” (John 9:13).

John 9:15-17

**15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him [as others had previously done] how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.  
16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.**

**17 ...What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.**

The division amongst the leaders continued. Is he a sinner? or does Jesus have the power and authority of God? Either He performed these miracles by the power of the devil or of God. This is the essential question, I believe, each of us must also answer.

John 9:18

**18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.**

What did they hope to gain by questioning the man's parents? They had the witness of the man himself; would they believe the word of his parents? I believe their reason for questioning his parents is in order to coerce them, not for the purpose of learning the truth. We learn they already had determined a course of action regarding the man's parents.

John 9:19-22

**19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doeth he now see?**

**20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:**

**21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.**

**22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.**

What did it mean for "someone to be put out of the synagogue?" Perhaps to finally be excommunicated.

Alfred Edershim states,

"Excommunication among them, however, came successively and by degrees, until it built up to a terrible climax of hate and vengeance. Certain temporary restrictions might be imposed to begin with; these might be increased in extent and intensity; finally, the penalties included curse and anathemas, unbearable social and economic pressures, and all of the fears and torments of an eternal hell...final excommunication... [by which is meant being put out of the synagogue], when a ban of indefinite duration was laid on a man. Henceforth he was like one dead. He was not allowed to study with others, no intercourse was to be held with him, he was not even to be shown the road. He might, indeed, buy the necessaries of life, but it was forbidden to eat or drink with such a one."<sup>4</sup>

Given the severity of the penalty, it was understandable the man's parents may have been reluctant to state who had healed their son, and it is also possible they may not have known His name. Hence, their reply, "He is of age; ask him" (John 9:23).

Having questioned his parents in the absence of their son, the leaders now spoke directly to the man.

John 9:24

**24 ...Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.**

In other words, “Young man, all you have to do is to tell us that you were healed by God, not by Jesus. We already know Jesus is a sinner and, therefore, He is not a servant of God!”

John 9:25-26

**25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.**

**26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?**

He had told them that his eyesight had been restored. He could now see. This is what was important to him.

John 9:27

**27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?**

The man recognized they were not interested in knowing the truth! Their interest in interrogating him was not to learn of His doctrine, but only to find some reason to arrest Jesus.

The man continued to question their denial of His power. He told them: (1) God heareth not sinners; (2) God only hears those who do his will; and, (3) If he were not of God, he could do nothing. (see John 9:30-33).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"To this there is no answer; it cannot be gainsaid; the words carry within themselves the evidence of their own verity. There is nothing left for the Pharisees to do but to revile and to persecute...He had taught them, and they knew it, and he knew it."<sup>5</sup>

Their final disposition of the miracle this man received was to “cast him out” (John 9:34).

Adam Clarke states,

“They immediately ‘excommunicated him,’ as the margin properly reads—drove him from their assembly with disdain, and forbade his further appearing in the worship of God. Thus, a simple man, guided by the Spirit of truth, and continuing steady in his testimony utterly confounded the most eminent Jewish doctors.”<sup>6</sup>

This man, now sits alone, having just been excommunicated by the Jewish leaders for telling the truth. Initially, he had been subjected to questioning by the Jewish leaders. His own witness of the miracle is also questioned. This is followed by the questioning of his parents and the threat of their excommunication. During their inquiry, the Jewish leaders had made great efforts to minimize and even dismiss the miracle he had received despite his tenacious witness of the restoration of his eyesight. He was finally excommunicated when he would not deny the miracle that had occurred in his life. No matter what has occurred, he is now able to see. This is something from birth he had never been able to do. Now, he has his sight. They cannot take that away from him! It is at that moment of contemplation that Jesus finds him.

John 9:35-38

**35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?**

**36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?**

**37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.**

### **38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.**

He is, however, not left alone. Jesus found him, and personally administered to him. Jesus came and personally bore His witness to him that He is the Lord, the Son of God, the anticipated Messiah! The record states the young man believed and worshipped Him. We may safely assume he then accepted the principles of the gospel; repented of his sins and accepted baptism and then became one of the Lord's disciples. Not only does the young man receive his eyesight, but even more, he also sees spiritually. What a glorious chain of events have just transpired in this man's life! I feel it is an honor and a privilege to have been able to share this experience with him. I am indebted to the gospel writers for preserving this narrative.

As Jesus sat with His new disciple, the Pharisees again gathered around Him and ask Him an important question. We might also ask this question of ourselves.

John 9:40-41

**40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?**

**41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"If you did not have the law of Moses and the words of the prophets; if you did not profess to worship the God of Israel in your synagogues and to sacrifice to him in your temple; if you were not the chosen people to whom the word of truth once came, you would not be condemned as severely as you are. But because you have the greater light, and rebel against it, you commit sin."<sup>7</sup>

It is important for those of us who have heard the word and felt the spirit to act. If we do not, are we then not also guilty of sin?

## **2. Prophecies Referring to the Lord as the Shepherd**

David, Isaiah, and Ezekiel each made specific reference to the Messiah as the Good Shepherd prior to His advent of the Savior. David in the 23rd Psalm says, "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalms 23:1). Also, in the One Hundredth Psalm, Israel sang, "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalms 100:3). Isaiah prophesied, "The Lord God will come...He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:10-11). The Prophet Ezekiel also taught, "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ...And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, said the Lord God" (Ezekiel 34:2, 31).

Bruce R. McConkie observes,

"...many of [the Jews] Messianic prophecies spoke of the Shepherd of Israel and of the day when the Son of David, sitting on the throne of David, should be King over them, when they all shall have one shepherd (Ezekiel 37:24)."<sup>8</sup>

In the LDS Topical Guide, there are approximately twenty-three scriptures, including those noted above, that are found in the Old and New Testament, in addition to the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants referencing Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. (see **Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd** in the *Topical Guide of*

*Holy Bible*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1979, 247). For those who are sincere in their evaluation of the message of Jesus Christ, the references to the good shepherd in the Old Testament would have been another source for consideration.

### **3. The Role of the Shepherd in Contrast with the Hireling**

The role of the shepherd was very important in Israel.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Those who cared for the flocks were not shepherders, but shepherds; sheep were not driven, but led; they hearkened to him whose voice they came to know.”<sup>9</sup>

W. Jeffrey Marsh and Ron R. Munns state,

“True shepherds would gather their sheep into a sheepfold at night to protect them from predators. These enclosures were usually built of rocks piled high, with only a small opening to serve as the entrance. Authorized entrance was through the door only (see John 10:1-2). At night, the shepherd would lay across the doorway (see John 10:7,9). There was no other way to get in the sheepfold but through the shepherd.”<sup>10</sup>

W. Jeffrey Marsh and Ron R. Munns continue,

“At times wild animals, driven by hunger, would desperately try to enter the sheepfold. True shepherds would never desert the flock. Instead, they would defend their charges with their own lives (see John 10:11-13). The true shepherd's chief concern was the well-being of his sheep (see John 21:15-17) ...Even his clothing was designed for the benefit and comfort of the sheep. His coat was large and open and normally had a large pocket attached to it suitable for carrying wounded lambs to safety.”<sup>11</sup>

George M. Mackie states,

“One of the most familiar and beautiful sights of the East is that of the Shepherd leading his sheep to the pasture...He depends upon the sheep to follow, and they in turn expect him never to leave them. They run after him if he appears to be escaping from them, and are terrified when he is out of sight, or any stranger appears instead of him...the shepherd comes to know his sheep very intimately. Many of them have [been given] pet names...One day a missionary, meeting a shepherd on one of the wildest parts of Lebanon, asked him various questions about his sheep, and among others, if he counted them every night. On answering that he did not, he was asked how he knew if they were all there or not. His reply was, 'Master, if you were to put a cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep and only let me put my hands on its face, I could tell in a moment if it was mine or not,'”<sup>12</sup>

I find it noteworthy that the true shepherd has a very close relationship with his sheep. He knows his sheep so well that if he were blindfolded, he could still identify any of his sheep by “letting me put my hands on its face.” It is my belief Jesus also knows each one of us by our name and He likewise could identify us under any circumstances.

W. Jeffrey Marsh and Ron R. Munns state,

“...the difference between a shepherd and a hireling herder [one who herds sheep only for hire is easily distinguished]. The one has personal interest and knows each of his sheep by name, the [hireling] knows them only as a flock, the value of which is gauged by number; to the hireling they are only as so many or so much. While the shepherd is ready to fight in defense of his own, and if necessary, even imperil his life for his sheep,

the hireling flees when the wolf approaches, leaving the way open for the ravening beast to scatter, rend, and kill.”<sup>13</sup>

The Life and Teaching of Jesus and his Apostles states,

“Hirelings have been known to sell sheep and then pocket the money and account for the loss by saying that wolves came and destroyed the sheep.”<sup>14</sup>

John R. Lasater shares the following observation,

“Some years ago, it was my privilege to visit the country of Morocco as part of an official United States government delegation. As part of that visit, we were invited to travel some distance into the desert to visit some ruins. Five large black limousines moved across the beautiful Moroccan countryside at considerable speed. I was riding in the third limousine, which had lagged some distance behind the second. As we topped the brow of a hill, we noticed that the limousine in front of us had pulled off to the side of the road. As we drew nearer, I sensed that an accident had occurred and suggested to my driver that we stop. The scene before us has remained with me for these many years.

“An old shepherd in the long flowing robes of the Savior’s day, was standing near the limousine in conversation with the driver. Nearby, I noted a small flock of sheep numbering not more than fifteen or twenty. An accident had occurred. The king’s vehicle had struck and injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd. The driver of the vehicle was explaining to him the law of the land. Because the king’s vehicle had injured one of the sheep belonging to the old shepherd, he was now entitled to one hundred times its value at maturity. However, under the same law, the injured sheep must be slain and the mean divided among the people. My interpreter hastily added, “But the old shepherd will not accept the money. They never do.

“Startled, I asked him why. And he added, ‘Because of the love he has for each of his sheep.’ It was then that I noticed the old shepherd reach down, lift the injured lamb in his arms, and place it in a large pouch on the front of his robe. He kept stroking its head, repeating the same word over and over again. When I asked the meaning of the word, I was informed, ‘Oh, he is calling it by name. All of his sheep have a name, for he is their shepherd, and the good shepherds know each one of their sheep by name.’

“It was as my driver predicted. The money was refused, and the old shepherd with his small flock of sheep with the injured one tucked safely in the pouch on his robe, disappeared into the beautiful deserts of Morocco.”<sup>15</sup>

The money was refused by the old shepherd, because of the love he had for each of his sheep. While there are many differences, as noted, between the Good shepherd and the Hireling, this I believe is the major difference. The love the Good shepherd has for his sheep. You may be able to purchase the services of a hireling, but you cannot purchase, regardless of the amount, the true love the Good shepherd has for each of his sheep. Nor can you purchase for any amount of money, the true love the Good Shepherd has for each of us. His love is not for sale. He gives it to all freely.

#### **4. The Parable of the Good Shepherd**

It is important to keep in mind when Jesus gives the parable of the Good Shepherd, He is referring to Himself thereby fulfilling prophecy.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Jesus said, ‘I am the good shepherd’ (John 10:14), which was tantamount to [him] saying, ‘I am the Lord Jehovah,’ because his Jewish hearers revered the Davidic declaration: ‘Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want,’ and so on through the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. Our anglicized reading is ‘The Lord is my shepherd,’ but in the Hebrew the title *Lord* is the name *Jehovah*.”<sup>16</sup>

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“[When] Jesus stated, “I am the door of the sheep...I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:7-9), [He was also saying] ... ‘I am the Messianic Deliverer who is to come. I am he of whom Isaiah wrote: ‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young’ (Isaiah 40:11).”<sup>17</sup>

Jesus now gave to those gathered to hear His teachings, the Parable of the Good Shepherd.

He begins by referring to those who come into the sheepfold not by the door (Himself) but by any other way.

John 10:1

**1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.**

The true shepherd, in contrast, enters in by the door.

John 10:2-5

**2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.**

**3 To him, the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.**

**4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.**

**5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.**

A major difference between a shepherder and a shepherd is the shepherder is behind the flock of sheep and drives them to their destination, assisted often by dogs who keep them together and moving forward. The shepherd, in contrast, is located in the front of the flock and they follow him. He knows their name and when he calls them, they follow where he leads them.

Generally, Jesus gave the meaning of His parables not to the listener, but in private to His disciples. Jesus now gave the interpretation of this parable to His listeners.

John 10:7, 9

**7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.**

**9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**

Jesus was declaring to those gathered He is the shepherd foretold by Isaiah and David. He is the Messiah.

He now addressed those who were the false religious leader's past, as well as those who presently serve.

John 10:8, 10

**8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.**

**10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: ...**

James E. Talmage states,

“Never has been written or spoken a stronger arraignment of false pastors, unauthorized teachers, self-seeking hirelings who teach for pelf and divine for dollars, deceivers who pose as shepherds yet avoid the door and climb over 'some other way,' prophets in the devil's employ, who to achieve their master's purpose, hesitate not to robe themselves in the garments of assumed sanctity, and appear in sheep's clothing, while inwardly they are ravening wolves.”<sup>18</sup>

John 10:10-11

**10 ...I am come that they might have life [immortality], and that they might have it more abundantly [exaltation].**

**11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**

Jesus again contrasted Himself with the hireling (the false religious leaders of the day).

John 10:12-13

**12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.**

**13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.**

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual states,

“The comparison between the good shepherd and the hireling was familiar to his audience. They knew hirelings who abandoned the sheep when danger arose and who cared only for himself. As noted earlier, there were those who “would sell the sheep that were under their care, pocket the money for themselves, and then tell the owner the loss of sheep was due to wolves that had come and destroyed the sheep.”<sup>19</sup>

Jesus bore His witness that He stands in stark contrast to the hireling who only herds sheep for money. When he is faced with threats to his life, he seeks only to preserve his life, thereby leaving the sheep in great danger.

John 10:14-15

**14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.**

**15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.**

It is “as if” Jesus is saying, “I will not forsake you. I know who you are and those of you that are receptive to the spirit, know who I am. I have come to earth to do the will of my Father in Heaven. In order for you to return again to my Father and your Father, it is necessary for me to give my life on your behalf. I am willing to make this offering for you because of my love for you.

Jesus now told those gathered that there are others of the Father's children whom He must also visit.

John 10:16

**16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold...and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.**

Those in Jerusalem did not understand to whom He was referring. Through the Book of Mormon record, we learned when Jesus visited ancient America following His resurrection, He appeared to those who were gathered and taught them.

B/M, 3 Nephi 15:21-22

**21 And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.**

**22 And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching.**

This scripture, in addition to words of Ezekiel, gives credence to the addition and value of other scriptures.

Ezekiel 37:15-17

**15 The word of the LORD came again unto me saying,**

**16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions.**

**17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall be one in thine hand.**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints holds that the Holy Bible is the stick of Judah, written for and by prophets called to teach the children of Israel. They also teach the Book of Mormon is for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and his descendants. Together they stand as dual witnesses for Jesus Christ and the truths He taught. Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, written by holy prophets, declare the principles of gospel truth. In the hands of individuals who are seeking to know spiritual truths, these two scriptural records become a sacred record, which if read and applied, will lead them to eternal life.

Jesus then concludes His explanation of the truths taught in this parable.

John 10:17-18

**17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.**

**18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Jesus proclaims the doctrine of divine Sonship. From God who is his Father he inherited the power of immortality, the power to live forever...From Mary, who is his mother, he inherited the power of mortality, the power to separate body and spirit, the power to die...Jesus, the Son of the mortal Virgin--this One Man of all men had power to live or to die; and having chosen to die, he had power to live again in glorious

immortality, never again to see death... What possible response can his hearers--then or now--make to this divine doctrine?"<sup>20</sup>

He has taught the parable of the Good Shepherd. He used events and experiences which were familiar to His listeners. When they did not understand, Jesus then interpreted the meaning of the parable to them, something He had previously only done with His disciples.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The response--then as now--can be but one of two things: belief or disbelief. There is no middle ground, no gray area, no room for compromise. Either he is the Atoning One or he is not."<sup>21</sup>

How will they respond? How will we respond?

John 10:20-21

**20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?**

**21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil...**

Some in the crowd continued to see Jesus as one who was a servant of the devil, come to earth, to further his work and dominion. Others saw Him as divine. One sent from the Father to show them the way back to Him. Are His words from the evil one or are they from heaven? Each one must decide for themselves now, just as the people did then.

## **5. The Feast of Dedication**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The Feast of Dedication is celebrated over two months after the feast of the tabernacles, this feast, instituted by Judas Maccabeus in 163 B.C., commemorated the rededication of the temple, following its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes, a pagan Syrian king."<sup>22</sup>

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

"It is December 20-27, A.D. 29; in just over three months, [Jesus] will be lifted up upon the cross because he is the Christ."<sup>23</sup>

John 10:23

**23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"**Solomon's porch.** A portico [a colonnade at the entrance] on the east side of the temple, said by Josephus to have been part of the original structure built by Solomon."<sup>24</sup>

John 10:24

**24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.**

For what purpose would “the Jews” (religious leaders) ask Jesus this question unless it were their sole purpose designed to trap him? If He tells them He is the Christ, the Promised Messiah, they will then use His witness against Him. He will be guilty of blasphemy, by His own words, a crime punishable under Jewish law by death.

For almost three years, Jesus has taught the people. He has taught them directly, through His miracles, and through parables. He has testified again and again of His divinity and given His witness to them that He is the promised Messiah of whom all the prophets of old have prophesied. He reminds them again of His prior teachings and witness and their response.

John 10:25-26

**25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.**

**26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.**

There must have been in the audience those who had also been present when He taught the parable of the Good Shepherd. They are among those requesting yet another witness for He reminds them, “ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you” (John 10:26).

John 10:29-30

**29 My Father, which gave them [the sheep who believe] me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.**

**30 I and my Father are one [in unity].**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The flocks of this world perish from [spiritual] hunger and cold and thirst. The Lord's sheep will never perish. The Father who gave the sheep to the Son and Shepherd has all power, and he, the Son, acts in the power of the Father. They are one.”<sup>25</sup>

John 10:31

**31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.**

Once again, the response of the wicked is to seek to silence the messenger. (see John 8:59).

Why do the Jews want to stone Him?

John 10:32-33

**32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?**

**33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**

Jesus then asked them.

John 10:34-36

**34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?  
35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;  
36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?**

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Does it offend you to hear me say that I am the Son of God? Do you not know that every righteous person to whom the word of God comes, and who then obeys the fullness of that law, shall become like the Father and be a god himself.”<sup>26</sup>

Jesus now concluded His message to His distracters.

John 10:37-38

**37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe not me, believe the works.  
38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.**

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“Jesus says, I could not do the works alone; they came by the power of the Father.”<sup>27</sup>

John 10:39

**39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand.**

Again, He used His power to transport Himself out of their midst (see John 7:30), for His time was not yet.

## **6. Jesus Goes to Bethabara in Perea**

Where did Jesus go when He left Jerusalem?

John 10:40

**40 And he went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.**

Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary states,

“**Bethabara.** A place beyond Jordan [River], in which, according to the Authorized Version of the New Testament, John [first] was baptizing (John 1:28). If this reading is correct Bethabara may be identical with Bethbarah (fords of Abarah) ...as some think...on the east of the river, nearly opposite Jericho.”<sup>28</sup>

Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary continues,

“**Perea.** A name for the country ‘beyond Jordan’ often used by Josephus, and adopted by all modern writers. It is not found in the Scriptures themselves.”<sup>29</sup>

D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner state,

**“John 10:40-42.** Jesus journeyed eastward to the Jordan Valley, crossed the river, and remained for a time where John at first baptized, at Bethabara (John 1:28), in the region called Perea (KJV, “beyond Jordan”).”<sup>30</sup>

Why did Jesus go to Bethabara in Perea?

It is apparent the persecution from the Jews (religious leaders) was increasing. Twice in a three-month period (see John 8:59; John 10:39), it had been necessary for him to use His divine powers in order to remove Himself from the murderous intent (see John 7:19) of those in opposition to His teachings who wanted Him silenced.

It was to Bethabara in Perea where John had first gone to preach repentance and to baptize. It was sufficiently removed from the control of the Jewish leaders, but close enough that the people could come and hear John teach. We read, “Then (they) went out to (hear John preach), “Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan” (Mathew 3:5). They would also come to hear Jesus teach.

John 10:41-42

**41 And many resorted unto him [Jesus], and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.**

**42 And many believed on him there.**

James E. Talmage states,

“The place was endeared to those who had gone to hear John and to be baptized by him; and as those recalled the impassioned call to repentance, the stirring proclamation of the kingdom by the now murdered and lamented Baptist, they remembered his affirmation of One mightier than himself, and saw in Jesus the realization of that testimony.”<sup>31</sup>

The amount of time Jesus spent teaching in Bethabara is not known, but after a period of time He left this area of comparative quiet and returned to Jerusalem. The reason? He has received word from Mary and Martha that their brother, “Lazarus is sick” (John 11:2).

## **7. Conclusions**

We have addressed four major events during our discussion. These are: (1) Jesus Heals a Blind man; (2) The Parable of the Good Shepherd; (3) The events at the Feast of Dedication and, (4) His retreat to Bethabara in Perea. In conclusion, let us reflect upon some of the lessons learned in the form of questions for us to consider.

Our first question for reflection: Just as Jesus healed the blind man in order to remind us that He has the power to cure physical blindness, He also has the power to cure our spiritual blindness. The question each of us must answer, “Is our faith sufficient to be healed of our spiritual blindness and once we can see, do our actions then reflect our testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?”

Our second question: Do we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd? And if we do, do we then respond to his call? Or are we like the Pharisees who do not recognize the voice of the Shepherd, but instead hear the voice of the adversary and follow the discordant sounds of his words? We are in the world, but we choose if we are to be a part of the world. The words of Joshua echo through the centuries: “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;” (Joshua 24:15).

Our third question: How many times must we hear the still small voice sound its warning before we determine to really change our lives? Like the Pharisees, we may have eyes, but do not see, and ears, but do not hear. Jesus walked amongst them and taught them daily, but they did not understand His plain yet simple message. Only when we firmly commit ourselves to keeping all the commandments and follow the teachings of Jesus as found in the Holy Scriptures can we ever hope to find peace in this world and in the world yet to come.

How blessed I feel to be able to have the scriptures and especially the teachings of Jesus. As I study them, I feel the spirit also encouraging me to be a little bit better.

## Footnotes

- 
- <sup>1</sup> *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 413.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 200.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 200-201.
- <sup>4</sup> Alfred Edershim. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 1883, 2:184, as quoted in *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 204-205.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 207.
- <sup>6</sup> *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*. Abridged by Ralph Earle. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967, [Nineteenth printing, March, 1991], 926.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 209.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 211.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 210-211.
- <sup>10</sup> *The New Testament for Today*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994, 163.
- <sup>11</sup> *The New Testament for Today*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994, 163-164.
- <sup>12</sup> *Bible Manners and Customs*. Beirut: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1898, 33-35.
- <sup>13</sup> *The New Testament for Today*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994, 165.
- <sup>14</sup> *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition, Revised, 1979], 109.
- <sup>15</sup> "Shepherds of Israel," in *Ensign*, May, 1988, 74.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Promised Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978, 155-156.
- <sup>17</sup> *The Promised Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978, 156.
- <sup>18</sup> *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 417-418.
- <sup>19</sup> *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition, Revised, 1979], 109.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 216-217.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 217.
- <sup>22</sup> *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11<sup>th</sup> Printing, 1976], 489.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 217-218.
- <sup>24</sup> *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11<sup>th</sup> Printing, 1976], 489.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 219.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 220.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Mortal Messiah: Book 3*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 220.
- <sup>28</sup> **Bethabara**. F.N. Peloubet. *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*. Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1925, [1947], 83.
- <sup>29</sup> **Perea**. F.N. Peloubet. *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*. Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1925, [1947], 501.
- <sup>30</sup> *Verse By Verse: The Four Gospels*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2006, 443.
- <sup>31</sup> *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 490.