

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.  
12 He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.  
13 He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.  
14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.  
16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.  
17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.  
18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. John 10:11-18

In speaking of His Father's love for what He was about to do in John 10:17, Jesus links His approaching death with His future resurrection. Jesus did not simply say that the Father loves Him because of His willingness to lay down His life, but Jesus also made it very clear that the Father loves Him because He was prepared to take His life back up again. Christ's death was not an end in itself nor was His resurrection an afterthought.

Christ died in order that He might rise again. He needed to do this so that He might ascend to the Father and subsequently offer, through the outpouring of His Spirit, the gift of life to everyone who would place their faith in Him. If Christ had not risen, none of these things would have taken place.

Christ's resurrection is essential to the gospel message. Without the resurrection of Christ the death of Christ would have been worthless (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17).

"And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." And now listen to the words of Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15:17. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins."

Is Christ's resurrection essential to the gospel message? Absolutely! The death and resurrection of Christ are linked. And certainly we see Christ linking His death with His resurrection here in John 10:17 when He said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again."

This is an amazing statement. And it is not so amazing because He told His audience that His Father loves Him for His willingness to lay His life down in order to take it up

again, but rather it is amazing by virtue of the fact that He is prophesying His resurrection.

This prophecy by Christ is mind-boggling. Listen to the words of Wilbur M. Smith. "If you or I should say to any group of friends that we expected to die, either by violence or naturally, at a certain time, but that, three days after death, we would rise again, we would be quietly taken away by friends, and confined to an institution until our minds became clear and sound again. This would be right, for only a foolish man would go around talking about rising from the dead on the third day, only a foolish man, unless he knew that this was going to take place, and no one in the world has ever known that about himself except One Christ, the Son of God."

Did Christ prophesy His resurrection absolutely? Jesus did not prophesy His resurrection only in John 10:17. He did it many times (Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 9:9; Luke 9:21-22). Let me just give you a sampling of those times recorded for us by other Gospel writers.

One account is from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 12:38-40, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.' (39) But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (40) for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'"

Listen to Gospel of Mark. Mark 9:9, "And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead."

And now from the Gospel of Luke. Luke 9:21-22, "But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone, (22) saying, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.'"

These passages that I have read to you are only a sampling of the many times that Christ prophesied His resurrection in all four Gospels. We cannot underestimate the significance of this fact.

Bernard Ramm said the following: "Taking the Gospel record as faithful history there can be no doubt that Christ Himself anticipated His death and resurrection, and plainly declared it to His disciples.... The gospel writers are quite frank to admit that such predictions really did not penetrate their minds till the resurrection was a fact (John 20:9). But the evidence is there from the mouth of our Lord that He would come back from the dead after three days. He told them that he would be put to death violently, through the cause of hatred, and would rise the third day. All this came to pass." Did Christ actually tell people that after His death He would rise again? I believe that any fair-minded individual would have to conclude that He did, in fact, do this in light of the many different accounts by all four Gospel writers. I certainly believe that He did."

There are many different reasons for believing in the gospel message, but certainly one of the reasons is the incredible boldness of Christ in predicting His resurrection.

"Christ Himself, as B.B. Warfield puts it, "deliberately staked His whole claim to the credit of men upon His resurrection. When asked for a sign He pointed to this sign as His single and sufficient credential."

Did He do it? Based on all the eyewitness accounts that we find not only in the Gospels but throughout the epistles as well! In fact, He so successfully pulled it off that His small group of disciples, going forth in the power of the Holy Spirit and based on their own personal experience with their living Lord, turned the world upside down with this very simple but glorious message that Christ, through His death, burial, and resurrection, had not only won a victory over the grave but had won a victory over sin itself.

Have we followed cunningly devised fables? No! Our faith is rooted in credible evidence. In John 10:17 we see one small piece of that evidence. And what was that one small piece of evidence. Christ boldly predicted that after His death He would rise again.

But Jesus did not say that He simply would die and later rise. He said more than this. Let me read John 10:17 for you once again. "For this reason the Father loves Me,

because I lay down My life that I may take it again." Jesus did not simply predict that He would die and then rise again. He predicted that He himself would lay His life down and then would later take His life back up again.

The significance of this personal emphasis begins with Him predicting that He would lay His life down. What did this clearly imply?

In speaking about His future death, Jesus implied that no one would be able to take His life from Him if He, in fact, did not lay it down (John 10:17). The voluntary nature of Christ's death in John 10:17 was stressed in order that His followers later would understand that Christ was not nailed to the cross because He was overpowered by sinful men, but rather He was nailed to the cross because He personally chose to be nailed to the cross.

And what evidence would He give to them that this was, in fact, the case? The voluntary nature of Christ's death on the cross would later be confirmed in His resurrection when He took up His life again. Doesn't this make sense? Certainly if Christ was able to take His life back up again, then certainly no one would have been able to take it from Him if He Himself did not allow them to do so.

The voluntary nature of Christ's death, which was confirmed by the resurrection, is emphasized for us once again in John 10:18.

**"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again."**

This should remind us of Christ's conversation with Pilate in John 19 where Pilate said to Christ, "Don't You know I have authority to take Your life?" And do you remember how Jesus responded? "You have no authority over Me, unless it has been given you from above." In essence, He said to Pilate, "You think you are in charge, but you are not in charge." But if Pilate was not in charge then who was in charge in respect to whether Christ was going to die? Jesus was in charge. Jesus was the one calling the shots both in regards to His death and His resurrection.

Though Christ was in complete control of all the events surrounding His death and resurrection, He only did what were consistent with His Father's will. Let us read the last phrase of verse 18. "This commandment I received from my Father."

What an amazing thing. Christ not only predicted His death and resurrection but He told those listening to Him, in essence, that there was absolutely nothing that could keep this from happening because He Himself, according to the will of His Father, had the authority to lay His life down, and He had the authority to take His life back up again.

Predicting His death and resurrection, based on his own authority to bring these things about, caused a division among those listening to Christ (John 10:19-21).

"There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words. (20) And many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?' (21) Others were saying, 'These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?'"

As always, Jesus' words caused a division. What did John 10:19 say? "There arose a division again among the Jews because of His word's." And what was the nature of this division?

John gives the view of Christ's opponents first. John 10:20, "And many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?'" They totally rejected His prediction about His death and resurrection and His ability to control the events surrounding those events. In fact, that, in essence, said He was crazy and obviously controlled by a demon. This, of course, is not a new response by Christ's enemies. It has occurred before in John 7:20; 8:48, 52.

The John 7 account is because Jesus healed the demoniac man.

The crowd answered, You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?

21 Jesus answered them, I did one deed, and you all marvel at it.

22 Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

23 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body

well?24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. John 7:20-24

Demoniacs were often thought to act insanely; in this case the crowd thinks Jesus is paranoid. But even this charge could imply the suspicion that he is a false prophet (7:12): false prophets were also thought to channel spirits (indeed, many pagan magicians claimed such spirit-guides). The penalty for false prophets was death. Josephus tells of one true prophetic figure in this period (he does not quite label him a “prophet”) who was regarded as insane and demon possessed; the Gospels mention another (John the Baptist- Mt 11:18).

John 7:21-24. Jesus asks the crowd to reason consistently (sound and fair judgment was paramount in Jewish teaching): why is it wrong for him to heal supernaturally on the sabbath, when circumcision (which wounds) is permitted on the sabbath? A later first-century rabbi argued similarly: If circumcising on the eighth day takes precedence over the sabbath (and it does), saving a whole life also does (as was commonly agreed). Some practices at the festivals (such as killing the Passover lamb and waving the lulab, i.e., palm branch, at the Feast of Tabernacles) likewise took precedence over the sabbath.

In our John 10: passage, there was another group of Jews who were more rational. John 10:21. "Others were saying “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”" Obviously, this group of Jews was impressed both by Jesus’ words and by His deeds. Were they, at this point in time, disciples of Christ? No! But they knew that those who were opposed to Christ and what he was doing were not correct in their conclusions.

Would they become disciples? I don’t know.

Did Christ prophesy that He would lay His life down and later take it up again? Yes he did. Was this important? Absolutely!

When Christ predicted His death and resurrection, He was preparing His sheep to

believe the eyewitness accounts of those very events.

Along with these events that correspond to his nature and some of the elements of his person as the Good Shepherd that we have discussed, ie. My sheep hear me and know me and I know them, his character as the Good Shepherd is revealed even more completely in Psalm 23. Jesus never quotes from this Messianic Psalm as he presents himself as the Good Shepherd but it is so descriptive of him and his goodness as the Shepherd of his people.

Christ is our Shepherd and we are the sheep of His pasture. In the second part Christ is our Host, and we are the guest at His table and residents in His home, where He has prepared a place for us as we have already studied.

This Psalm may not be strictly Messianic in its prediction of the *coming* of Jesus the Messiah, but in its ideas, expressions, and applications it points to the Good Shepherd who is the Messiah. Let's ponder together the beauty of the Psalm and the life and work of the Good Shepherd, who is also the Great Shepherd resurrected and dwelling in heaven and the Chief Shepherd who will return for His sheep.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming day when

"the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isa. 40:10-11).

Another Hebrew prophet Ezekiel in similar vane saw the coming of

"one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD have spoken" (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

Keep in mind that king David had been dead six hundred years when Ezekiel was writing this prophecy! The prophet is speaking of a greater than David the Messiah who will come and shepherd His people.

In the Hebrew Old Testament God the Father is designated as "The Shepherd of Israel." He is the Pastor of the Jewish nation. When Jesus declared Himself "the Good Shepherd" in John 10:11 the Jewish people knew that He was claiming to be Jehovah—the-in-flesh.

The Good Shepherd Jesus Christ has all the shepherd qualities and characteristics described in Psalm 23. He is the great I AM. The Good Shepherd of John 10 is the Jehovah Shepherd of Psalm 23. Jesus of Nazareth is the absolute timeless, eternal, independent, self-existent sustained, pre-One. He is the great I AM (John 8:58).

The Shepherd can be depended upon to provide nourishment and rest. "He makes me lie down in green pastures: He lead me beside the still waters" (v. 2). The imagery is of sheep moving around grazing during the morning hours. They have found enough grass to make them full, and now they are tired and need to rest. The shepherd causes them to lie down in the grassy meadows with a sufficient water supply. When rest becomes imperative for us He supplies it. The parallel line reinforces the same thought. He finds a safe place for the sheep to rest beside the still waters. What is pictured by the psalmist is nourishment, safety and a peaceful resting place for the sheep.

As we feed on Christ in His Word we see Him, eat Him and drink Him. He is our spiritual food. It is the responsibility of the sheep to appropriate the spiritual food daily.

Not only does He lead me to spiritual nourishment and needed rest, but He forgives me and restores my soul.

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The shepherd as a guide now appears. "He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (v. 3). The emphasis of the verse is on the righteousness of God. God always leads men into His righteousness. His reputation and



character are at stake. It is "for His name's sake." His character and reputation must be upheld. Just as the Lord Jesus is a perfect example of the character of God, so we His followers are to become like our model.

We are like wayward sheep wandering about aimlessly. Isaiah 53:6 describes us spiritually. "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

God reconciles us to Himself based on the death of Christ.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:9-11).

The God of grace sets before us prodigals the fatted calf! He gives me back my life.

Remember how Jesus restored Peter after He rose from the dead? The Apostle Peter was acutely aware of God's forgiveness and restoration. He wrote, "Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3).

We have a gracious Shepherd who provides forgiveness, peace and reconciliation to God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

The abiding presence of the Shepherd is the emphasis in verse four. "You are with me." "Yes, 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" (v. 4).

When we fail and feel beaten down and done in our Good Shepherd comes to our side to demonstrate His changeless love and faithfulness. When we feel like all the music has gone out of our lives He gives us songs in the night. When we lay shattered in the dust He holds us in the palm of His hand. Nothing in life, death, pain, disappointment can separate us from our Shepherd.

**“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).**

The "valley of the shadow of death" is literally "valley of deep darkness." The Hebrew word does not refer to death, but is much broader and includes all the profound dark bitter experiences in life including death. It represents the deepest valleys you go through in life. God's comfort is with us in all kinds of darkness in life. The psalmist is picturing those experiences in life when sorrow and disease, disappointment and distress, pain and anguish of the soul make the heart break under its heavy load. He abides with us to comfort us in the valley of depression, serious illness, rejection, disloyalty, death of a spouse or loved one, even the experience of death itself.

Jesus reminds us there is no dark valley at death for the believer. Jesus conquered death. Only the one who is the Resurrection and the Life can take us by the hand and lead us into eternal life. Every individual who has put his faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior will "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Jesus said to his friend Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). The Apostle everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26). The Apostle Paul was awaiting word from Nero as to whether he would be set free or be put to death. He expressed his faith in the resurrection of Christ when he wrote from his prison cell in Rome, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The Good Shepherd is my constant companion in life and death.