

***"But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10:26-28***

While traveling through Jordan and Israel, I noticed two amazing things: the shepherd stayed in one place where he could observe the sheep and they could see and know his location while they were feeding or resting. Second, when it was time to move the flock, he spoke, turned, and started walking. The sheep followed him so closely, that there was no noticeable space between the sheep. It is a most amazing thing to see a shepherd walk the valley with a hundred sheep fast on his heels. Of the dozens of shepherds and flocks that I observed, never once did I see a shepherd look back as he lead them nor did I see sheep stray from the flock as they were being lead. It was as if they did not want the shepherd out of their sight.

I have been told that sheep stray only when they are young and inexperienced with the shepherd. The shepherd waits until the sheep are secure before he looks for the stray. When he finds it he will break it's leg and return it to the flock so that it will stay close to the flock for security. When the break is healed the animal will have become so accustom to the shepherd and the flock that it will stay close by. Sheep that are non productive or continue to be unmanageable are culled from the flock.

With this in mind, let us look at what Jesus meant when He referred to those who believe on Him as being His sheep.

The first mark of true sheep is that they recognize the shepherd. ***"My sheep my voice.. ."*** (to recognize the source and understand the message). Jesus refers to two groups of people in John 10:26-28, those who are not and those who are His sheep. Those who are not, will not understand His message or truly recognize Him, as in ***John 10:26*** and ***John 6:60***, ***"Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can it?'"*** These disciples were not the twelve, but were the thousands that followed Him from the feeding of the 5,000 men plus women and children, who would make Him king. They were indeed disciples in that they did follow Him and sat under His teaching but they were not His sheep, fore Jesus said, ***"But there are some of you that believe not.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, 'Therefore say I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.'"***

Secondly, a mark of a true sheep is to respond to the shepherd, ***John 10: 27b***, ***"and they follow Me"***. (They are obedient). Jesus points out that only His sheep will truly respond in obedience while others will not, such as in ***John 6:66***, ***"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."*** Compare this with ***John 6:67-69***, ***"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, 'Will ye also go away?' Then Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."***

True sheep of Christ know Him and follow Him in loving obedience. Can you say with Peter that you believe and are sure that Jesus is "the Christ"; the one sent from God the Father to die on the cross for your sins and rose bodily from the dead for your justification to give you eternal life? If so, have you received Him as your personal savior? Are you regularly attending a church where others believe the same and where the Word of God is taught or are you wandering from the flock like some of the goats I observed while in Jordan, picking and nibbling here and there independently from the flock?

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