

The Lord is my Shepherd – Part 2

Talk given by Guy Kasongo at The Bridge Christian Fellowship – 14/09/2008

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Main reading: **Psalm 23**

Psalm 23 : 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, 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. a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

”.

Hence, the relationship between the shepherd and the flock is the most vital for the life of the sheep. Therefore, it is crucial that the sheep understand without any shade of doubt this relationship. “The Lord is my shepherd” is a great statement and the starting point for the sheep’s journey. It is also an expression of the sheep’s trust and expectations from the shepherd in the daily life; “I shall not want”! The sheep anticipates its complete satisfaction in declaring: “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”.

The structure in the sheepfold can be summarised through the following relationship:

- 1 – The *Good / Chief Shepherd* and the *local shepherds* (who are also sheep in their nature)
- 2 – The *local shepherds* and the *sheep*
- 3 – The *Good /Chief Shepherd* and the *sheep*
- 4 – The *local shepherds* between them
- 5 – The *sheep* between them

The Bible also speaks of other animals. Some of them are outside the sheepfold and some others can be found accidentally, temporarily or subtly infiltrating in the local sheepfold. For instance, we are told of a *dog returning to his own vomit*; a *sow having washed, to her wallowing in the mire*; *the goats who will be sent into the lake of fire*; then we have *fox, vipers, wolves*, etc.

The word **fox** (Gk: *alopez*). From the expression *cunning as a fox* and when typifying a person, a fox characterises someone who has the potential to deceive with skills and cleverness. Used in singular, the word *fox* is mentioned only once in the entire New Testament; that is in Luke 13.32, in relation to Herod. Hence, our interest in this type of person, namely *Herod*.

- **Herod the Great** (73 - 4 BC) : king of Judea was cruel and sought to kill the new born baby Jesus and ordered the killing of the innocents;
- **Herod Antipas** (died around 40 AD): was a tetrarch or governor of 4 provinces including Galilee. He was the son of Herod the Great; at the instigation of his wife *Herodias*, he ordered the execution of John the Baptist.
- **Herod Agrippa I** (10 BC – 44 AD: was also king of Judea and the grandson of Herod the Great. He imprisoned Peter and executed James;
- **Herod Agrippa II** (died around 93 AD): was king of various territories. In the year 60, he presided at the trial of the apostle Paul

Herod is a name that is mentioned about 40 times in the Bible; Herod means *hereo*; wherever Herod is mentioned, he is in direct opposition to the Lord Jesus, to His servants and to the Church and there is always a threat and the idea of killing Jesus or His followers.

- In Matthew 2.13, Herod sought to destroy the young Child, Jesus
- In Mark 3.6, “Herodians and Pharisees sought to destroy Jesus”
- In Luke 9.9, he confirms “John I have beheaded ...”

- In Luke 23.11-12, “Then Herod, with his men of war, *treated Him with contempt and mocked Him* [...] That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other”
- In Acts 12.1, “he stretched his hands to *harass* some from the Church” (to vex, anger, annoy, confuse or agitate)

Herod was also the name of the person persecuted Polycarp and tried to make him (John’s disciple and bishop of the Church of Smyrna) deny his faith in the Lord Jesus; to this, Polycarp replied “**Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?** ”

Herod is mentioned for the first time in the NT (Mat 2.1) at the very birth of Jesus Christ when seeking to destroy Him; the last time (Acts 23.35), Paul was kept in Herod’s judgement hall.

That is Herod!

Hence the warning in Mark 8.15; "**Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.**"

We know what or who is Herod but what is his leaven?

Leaven is a substance especially used in bakery to cause fermentation. It is also defined as being an agency or influence that produces a gradual change.

In the New Testament, there is a clear link between the thoughts of Herodians, Pharisees and Sadducees.

In fact, we read what follows:

- Matthew 16.6 “ Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”
- Mark 8.15 “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”

By merging these two Scriptures, we can read:

“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees, and of Herod”

Reading 2:

Matthew 16: 11-12: 11 "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? --but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees*.

- Leaven of Herod : hatred, harassment and persecution of God’s People using seemingly religious tricks
- Leaven of Pharisees: promotion of religious traditions
- Leaven of Sadducees: promotion of self-righteousness

However, since the animals described earlier are all types of people not having the life of Christ in them, there is always an opportunity to become a sheep through the process of *metamorphosis* that is called *repentance* and the *new birth*.

In contrast to these of animals, the word sheep used in John 10 is derived from the Greek word *probaton*. It means something that is walking forward. Thus,

- the sheep walks forward and follows His Shepherd;
- there is no confusion whatsoever as to who is his leader;
- the sheep knows and hears His Shepherd’s voice;
- the sheep does by no mean follow a stranger but flees from him;
- the sheep is satisfied with the Shepherd’s provision;

- the sheep dwells in the sheepfold and love the companionship of the Shepherd;
- the sheep depends entirely on the Shepherd's pastoral care;
- the sheep gets in the sheepfold through the door

Especially in these last days, it is vital that we all understand the nature of these relationships. We have now false ministers who are in charge of the flock in many places. These false ministers have never undergone a *metamorphosis* to acquire the Shepherd's life.

Reading 3: John 10.1-5

V.3 – A genuine sheep hears his Shepherd's voice!

We are commanded by the Shepherd to flee away from any kind of leaven and to abide in the following attitude to one another:

- Love one another
- Forgive one another
- Submit to one another
- Humility
- God's wisdom
- Self-denial

I Corinthians 6.7 Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?

Philippians 2

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, **2** fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. **3** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. **4** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **5** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **7** but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.