

# Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 8, Shepherd King

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 8, Sheperd King.

Well, in this section we're going to finish up the thought about the release and springboard into the person who was supposed to institute release, which is the king.

And we'll do that by talking about one of the most important metaphors for the king to be found, and that's the term shepherd. But for now, let me just spend some time finishing up our last lecture on the release concept. So, it was never done.

2 Chronicles 36:21 says there are consequences for that. But what's important is for us to remind ourselves that God raised up a conscience for ancient Israel. That conscience for ancient Israel was the prophets.

And they were the mediators from God. The prophets were the successors to Moses. They were designed by God to speak about the law to Israel.

And so, they bridged the problem concerning things like the release when it was never done. So, let me draw your attention then to an important prophet like Isaiah. And if we could look at just a couple of verses in Isaiah chapter 42, God writes through Isaiah, look, my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my being delights, I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.

Of course, it's not transparent about who the servant is and how it all works. What is transparent is that God will use this servant to bring justice. That's a technical word; justice is what kings were supposed to do as providers and protectors.

And so, as God speaks about this one who will bring about justice, notice in verse 6 of Isaiah 42, I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations. And what will he do as a light to the nations? He will open blind eyes and bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. What he will do is bring about justice by setting people free.

Prisoners will be set free from prison. Isaiah seems to take that concept of what this servant would do, and by the time we get to chapter 61, he has developed the concept of the servant even more. But there in that famous passage, he writes in chapter 61, the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to

proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

Now, what Isaiah seems to have done here is a passage that's open to various interpretations, but what I think Isaiah seems to have done is to have utilized the vocabulary of the release to describe what the coming servant figure is going to do. And I think that this is clearest when he says things like proclaim liberty to captives. The word liberty is the word *deror*.

It's one of the most important word release words in the Hebrew Bible. I suspect he's using this in an adaptive way so that he's talking not just about the *deror* that occurs every seven years. He seems to be referring to a unique royal ministry of a coming servant figure.

In other words, I think he might be adapting the release language, returning it to where it originated, to a royal figure, the servant. You know, sometimes, as Christians, we forget that we cannot understand our Bible if we don't understand kingship. And terms like a servant—at first blush, we look at the word servant, and we know that that's an ameliorating word because the servant is really a slave.

But what we don't know is that slave is a royal term. Who knew? Well, that's why we're watching this video. Ancient Near Eastern kings would commonly picture themselves as slaves to a given deity.

In fact, when a king ordered the building or refurbishing of a temple to a deity, the king commonly pictured himself as a slave. He would have images drawn of himself dressed in a work garment, which meant he had no upper garment and a lower garment. The king was pictured with a basket of dirt on his head and holding the basket like this.

It's all to show the picture of the king as a slave to the deity. He is building the temple for the deity, and he uses royal language to describe that, but it seems counterintuitive that a king would refer to himself as a slave in doing so. I think it's entirely plausible that the servant that Isaiah is talking about is not an anti-royal figure; he's a royal figure.

And so, in Isaiah 61, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, he is the Lord has anointed me. Well, the word anointed me is a word from which we get our English word, Messiah. So, I think Isaiah 61 could easily be a passage understood to describe a coming royal figure who will proclaim a release, but it's perhaps an adaptation of the release concept to describe how the king will function.

He will be a provider and a protector. But whatever the case, Isaiah 61 is clearly used by our Lord in Luke chapter 4 to reveal both the identity of the king and the activity.

In Luke chapter 4, we have this strategic passage that's well known; it actually gets preached in the Bible, and it's a passage in which Jesus reveals himself to be the servant figure that Isaiah predicted in Isaiah 61.

And so here in Luke's gospel, this is the first presentation of Jesus as a royal figure and the king of Israel. So, he came to Nazareth, which is his hometown, where he had been brought up, and as was his custom, he entered the synagogue on Shabbat, and he stood up to read, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Isn't that just significant? He didn't open Isaiah himself; apparently, it was handed to him.

And so, he opened the book; of course, it wasn't a book, it was a scroll, and he found the place where it was written: Isaiah 61, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release, *aphesis*, which is the Greek word both for salvation as well as for release. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

And he stops right in the middle of verse 2 in Isaiah 61. It seems to be that what Jesus was doing was announcing to his people in Isaiah, renouncing to his people in his era, that the person Isaiah talked about was now here and that Jesus was using the release terminology of Leviticus 25 as it was adapted by Isaiah to reveal his identity in Luke chapter 4. What Jesus seems to be saying here is a merger of the two concepts. On the one hand, the Messiah is here, and he's going to proclaim a cancellation of debts.

John Yoder wrote a very interesting book on this. He also seems to be saying, however, that what the coming messianic figure will do is heal the blind. He's merging the healing ministry of the Messiah with the royal ministry of ancient Israel's king, exemplified in canceling debts.

Contrary to American audiences, the audience of Jesus at Nazareth seems to have understood, at least in part, what he was claiming. He was claiming to be the king of Israel. They found that unacceptable because they found that to be objectionable, and they rejected him, and only by some kind of miracle or deliverance from God was he actually able to save his life in that event.

So, Jesus appears to have been using the ancient royal practice in which God is king to institute a release, and I'll say maybe in capital letters, maybe identifying himself as God because he was announcing not the release every seven years but the release that was bound up in his own identity as the incarnate God. Now, not everyone will agree with that, and I myself am not prepared to argue the point, but clearly, something of monumental proportions is occurring in Luke 4 when he announces his identity and proclaims a release. Scholars are going to differ on how we explain it,

but I suspect it is tied to Isaiah 61's adaptation of Leviticus chapter 25 where we have the famous jubilee concept.

So, there is an important reality that I'm sharing with you here or trying to share with you. We need to read the Bible holistically. We need to figure out ways to read Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61, and Luke 4. We need to figure out ways to make sense of all of that.

It's not adequate just to say that Leviticus 25 is limited to the release that I taught you about. We need to figure out ways of understanding how Isaiah used Leviticus 25 and how Jesus used Isaiah 61. Until that's done, I think we are impoverishing a very rich biblical message.

So, at any rate, with that in mind, let me take you back to the ancient release and tell you about this excursus on shepherd as a royal title. What I didn't tell you is that in virtually every release that we have found in Mesopotamia, the king refers to himself as the shepherd. That can't be accidental that in every release that the king canceled debts, he introduced himself to his people as the shepherd.

So, what we want to do is to go back to the old Babylonian period and capture that point and then figure out where all of this goes to make sense in the Bible. Just as I mentioned to you briefly, if we don't understand the vocabulary of kingship in the ancient world, we're not going to understand the biblical message, and I cited the example of a slave. Now, I want to cite for you the example of a shepherd.

Shepherd is one of the most common royal titles and or epithets in all of the ancient Near East. I have a document that I can show you that cites all of the examples or almost all of the examples of kings who cite themselves as shepherds. It was one of the most famous, persistent, royal presentations that we have in the whole ancient Near East.

It is always in the ancient Near East. It is always a positive title. We do not have in the ancient Near East the use of the title shepherd. We do not have that as a bad term. It's always a good term.

It's a term that is that is set aside to identify two great activities of kingship. In the shepherd title, he is a provider and a protector. There is an excellent volume written by a modern author named Tim Laniak.

I forget where Tim teaches [Gordon-Conwell, Charolette], but I believe it's a school in the northeast part of the country. He wrote a book published by. I think it might have been Ivy Press, InterVarsity, or Tyndale, I forgot which. The title of the book was *Shepherds After My Own Heart*.

In the back of the book, he lists all the royal titles of all the kings who claim to be shepherds. He shows us the ubiquity of the title shepherd for kings in the Near East. What I will tell you is this: Out of the vast majority of kings who lived and ruled in the ancient world, we do not have documents from them.

But from those kings from whom we do have documents, the large majority of those kings referred to themselves at some time or another as shepherd. Many times, they would use a wide variety of adjectives, just shepherd, righteous shepherd, humble shepherd, zealous shepherd, and dozens of different adjectives, all functioning around the title shepherd. There is something of monumental importance, therefore, between the fact that in ancient Mesopotamia, every time there was a release, the king called shepherd, and the fact that God self-reveals himself in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as a shepherd.

So, what we're going to do is look at some passages in the scriptures, but before we do that, I would be in error if I did not make the point to you about the ubiquity of the title shepherd in the ancient Near East for kings whether it was a Sumerian king, an Akkadian king, a Babylonian king, an Egyptian king, all of the kings of the ancient Near East who left us documents referred to themselves as shepherds. It was a title of monumental importance because it was always designed to make a point; the specific point of the title was always benign and favorable because it emphasized in the ancient Near East that the king was the shepherd who provided for and protected his people.

So, this is a powerful title that has rich implications for the text in which we're looking. So, in my class notes here, I take us to, in the Old Testament, God as a shepherd. I would go so far as to say to you that in Genesis 1 and 2, there's a sense in which God is picturing himself as a shepherd because in Genesis 1 and 2, He is providing and protecting Adam and Eve.

He provides for them land on which they can live and water that is permanent water, and He protects them because He puts them in a safe place. He puts them in the garden. Now, we don't know anything about the world outside the garden, but what it implies in Genesis 1 and 2 is that God is the great king who provides and protects.

As a matter of fact, I think it's the background for the ancient picture of God as being hospitable, but that's another subject area which I'll save. In the Old Testament, the first place that we come to where God specifically calls himself shepherd is in, or is referred to as shepherd, is in Genesis chapter 48. And in Genesis chapter 48, verse 15, we read this.

It's in the blessing of Israel when Israel sees Joseph's sons. And so, we read this as Israel blessed Joseph and said in chapter 48, verse 15, the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to

this day, the messenger who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads and may my name live on in them and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac. And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

It is certainly not accidental that the first time that the title shepherd is used in Genesis is in the blessing of Jacob to Joseph and his sons. That reminds us that he understood the ancient royal picture of the God he worshipped because this God was a provider and a protector. He's been the shepherd all of Jacob's life.

One of the problems that we have, friends, with the title shepherd is it automatically evokes in our thinking a pastoral shepherd. We have this picture of our Lord Jesus, who is, in the words of the songstress, a gentle shepherd. And who among us has not seen the picture of Jesus with a beautiful white sheep, a young sheep in his arms? So, we think about this almost completely in the imagery of literal shepherding and literal sheep.

So, if I could start this off a little more effectively by telling you early on, it is a title of almost all consequential kings in the ancient Near East. If we're going to understand the way the Bible uses the term, specifically the Old Testament, we have to get it in our minds that the matrix for the title is no longer pastoral. I'm hoping you're hearing this.

The matrix of the title is no longer pastoral but is royal. At some time in deepest antiquity, the pastoral image served to reflect ideas that kings wanted to promote. But at some time, who knows when, it certainly wasn't a moment, it ceased being primarily pastoral and became primarily royal.

Let me illustrate how we've done the same thing. In our culture, many of us who've gone to church refer to our ministers as our pastors. Pastor is the Latin word for shepherd.

We tend to think about it as it is: a title. Pastor is something you would never use for your mechanic. It's something you would never use for your insurance agent.

The pastor is the official leader of the church. It has largely lost its original imagery, which was from sheep and shepherds, and it has now become a title. So, it was in antiquity only more so because the title was tied so directly to kingship.

So, when Jacob says, the Lord has been my shepherd all my life, he's probably, almost certainly, not talking about a shepherd in the pastoral sense. He's talking about it in the royal sense, where God was his provider and his protector. The second passage in Genesis where this appears is in Genesis 49, the chapter devoted to the full blessing, and we read this about Joseph.

His bow, in verse 24, remained firm, and his arms were agile from the hands of the mighty one of Jacob. From there is the shepherd, the stone or rock of Israel. Now you can tell plainly in Genesis 49 verse 24 he has juxtaposed two seemingly disconnected terms, shepherd and rock.

They are only disconnected if we read them literally. If we read them as royal terms, then they are simultaneous. He is the king, who is the shepherd, who is the provider and the protector.

He is the king who is the rock. In that particular case, he is the provider and protector in the sense that a rock provides strength and safety. So, what we see in the very first book of the Old Testament canon is an awareness that God is the shepherd and that the imagery of shepherd is not any longer the imagery of the animal world.

It's the imagery that came to be embodied in the twin activities of the king as the provider and the protector. So, with that in mind, we can take us to the most famous passage of shepherding, certainly in the Old Testament, maybe in the New. It's Psalm 23.

So, what we're trying to show you is that Psalm 23 is a passage that has been largely misused. And I have to tell you that as I am lecturing to you right now, I realized that I don't have available a book I wanted to bring to read from because I'm not technically in the classroom, I'm in a video room. And so, I did not bring this document.

Maybe when this set of lectures is done, and I go home this evening, I can remember to bring that book back with me. But the reason I said all of that is to tell you Psalm 23, at first blush, looks like a Psalm about sheep and shepherds. That's the way almost everyone understands the Psalm.

But that doesn't really work when you get to the second half of the Psalm. So it starts out with the declaration that the Lord is my shepherd. Now, as you hear me talk to you now, we're trying to make the point that it's plausible that what the psalmist was saying is that the Lord is my shepherd and that that meant in their language, the Lord is my king.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.

He restores my life. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake. Well, in order to make it more believable to you, I have a royal inscription from an Assyrian king named Tukulti-Ninurta I that is so stunningly similar to Psalm 23 that when my students hear this, they are literally just shocked.

And it illustrates so clearly, and I think indisputably, that Psalm 23 isn't really describing, it isn't really describing sheep and shepherds, it's describing God as the provider and the protector. So what Psalm 23 is really saying is the Lord is my king, and the first half of the Psalm is divided into telling us how God provides. He provides green pastures, he provides quiet waters, and so on and so forth.

Everybody who has ever read this has wondered why he shifts from that imagery in the second half to a seemingly radically different imagery. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for thou art with me. Your rod and your staff, well, there you go.

As king, God has a royal rod or staff, and they're with me. They comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup overflows. Surely goodness and steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Well, one minute, he's talking about a beautiful pastoral scene; I bet you can just see it with me: God is the king, surrounded by all these cute, white, clean sheep. In the next imagery, he's talking about God providing safety in the presence of his enemies. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure how much to tell you and how much not to tell you; we're doing all this as a first in this week's lecture presentation.

But in the book of Joshua, you have an example of what he's talking about: you provide a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You might remember in that passage in Joshua that Adonai Bezek has been defeated. Is it Joshua, or is it Judges? My memory is slipping me right now. But at any rate, Adonai Bezek has been defeated, and as a defeated king, he sits under Joshua's table, and there he shows submission to the conquering Joshua.

Well, all of this is designed to tell us that when a king would win a battle, he would apparently, in some circumstances, take the captured king and set him beneath his table as both a sign of submission and triumph of the king. So in the second half of Psalm 23, God is uniting the Psalm by pointing out how God the king has defeated the enemies and put his enemy under the table of the Israelite king. So what we have that unites Psalm 23 is not everything in the Psalm deals with shepherd imagery, everything in the Psalm deals with royal imagery.

In the first half of the Psalm, God is the provider. In the second half, God is the protector. So, in the release language of the ancient Near East, the king refers to himself as a shepherd because that means the king provides and protects.

Psalm 23 picturing God in the same way. Now, this is not a Bible study class per se, so I have to be careful not to overspend time on one thing. But there's a marvelous

article by Pamela Milne, in which she shows exegetically that the language of Psalm 23 is taken from the Exodus wanderings.

In other words, the vocabulary replicates Psalm 23, the language of Israel going through the wilderness. And so, what it's doing is saying at a later date, it's showing that God is doing this for us today as well. Just as God showed himself to be king in the Exodus, so he's not in the wilderness wanderings, so now he's showing himself to be king in the period of the monarchy.

So, what I'm intent on trying to show you is that when we get a handle on this, it's going to help us understand how the term shepherd is a royal term, and it has great implications in the rest of the Bible. So, let me draw your attention to Micah's chapter 5. In Micah chapter 5, we have the first place in the biblical literature where the term Micah is used in a messianic passage. So, if you went with me to Micah chapter 5, Micah writes this: muster yourself in troops, daughters of troops, they have laid siege against us with a rod they will smite the judge of Israel on the cheek.

Judge, of course, is a royal term as well as an administrative term. But as for you, Bethlehem Ephratah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you, one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings are from long ago, from the days of eternity, from ancient days. Therefore, he will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has born a child, then the remainder of his brethren will return to the Israelites, and he will arise and shepherd his flock.

All right, what he's doing here is something that is stunning, I think. He's telling us that there is a coming figure who will come from Bethlehem, and what this coming figure will do is he will be born of a woman to deliver his people in order that he will shepherd his flock. This is so fascinating because Christ himself was born in Bethlehem, of course, of a woman, and what he does is introduce himself in the New Testament as the shepherd of Israel.

So, if we could remind ourselves then that shepherd means to rule, to act as king, we have a connection then between the prediction of a coming shepherd and king in Micah 5, the first what I would call overtly messianic use of the term shepherd. Probably the most dramatic passage that we have in the Old Testament comes from a later date. It's Ezekiel, and in Ezekiel, he devotes nearly an entire chapter of his book to the only case in the Old Testament where we have the shepherd metaphor developed allegorically.

In other words, the whole chapter is given over to something unique. It is the shepherd metaphor, which is always about kingship, but he presents it in an allegorical fashion to describe the activity of a coming figure, and then what he does is he climaxes this at the end by saying in verse 22 in his long metaphorical allegorical chapter in verse 22, therefore I will deliver my flock and they will no longer be a prey,

and I will judge between one sheep and another, and then notice the very dramatic and important verse, then I will set over them 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 think this is another passage that I would say is stunningly messianic.

David wrote about God as the shepherd of Israel, and now Ezekiel, by the time of Ezekiel, David's been gone for five centuries, and so Ezekiel says, I'm going to set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and of course the New Testament pictures Jesus as the son of David, and so what we have that I think is so dramatic here, or actually multiple things that are so dramatic, is the unification of the new shepherd with God himself. Let me just point out the passage to you once again. I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and in verse 24, I will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them.

What he has done here is unite the coming shepherd and king, with the presence of God himself, and this, of course, fits perfectly the self-representation of Jesus that we read about most dramatically in John chapter 10. Ezekiel 34 has been shown exegetically to be the background to the greatest shepherd passage in the New Testament, which is John 10. One shepherd Jesus talks about in John 10 is language, among many other things in John 10 that are taken from Ezekiel 34.

Now then, before we get to John 10, which is well beyond the parameters of Old Testament backgrounds, perhaps I can get away with it since no one is here to stop me right now. Before we get to that, let me take you to the last shepherd passage of consequence. It comes to us from Zechariah chapters 10, 11, and 13, and these passages are really significant because in the second half of Zechariah, personally, I think Zechariah is one of the hardest books in the Old Testament to interpret.

In the second half of Zechariah, he talks about this coming shepherd figure, and he refers to him in Zechariah as the smitten shepherd. It's really the first place in which he overtly talks about this coming shepherd as an individual who is smitten. And so, this so-called suffering shepherd that takes up the better part of several chapters in Zechariah is the first place where he is pictured as smitten or something along that line.

Now, what is so interesting about that is he also pictures the coming figure as a royal king. And so, if I may describe to you in chapter 9, a passage which was specifically used in one of the crucial self-presentations of Christ, the text tells us in chapter 9 of Zechariah, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey, and then he will bring about peace on behalf of Israel.

Well, this passage is used. It's as if the entire second half of Zechariah has as its major emphasis or goal to talk about a coming shepherd figure who will come to Jerusalem and ride into the city on a donkey to have himself announced as king of Israel. All four Gospels record this event in the person of Christ. As he draws near to the end of his life, his last great revelatory act to his people is to ride into the city on a donkey, announcing himself as the shepherd figure of Israel.

Now, that shepherd figure means king, and he comes to introduce himself as king, let me explain to you, we won't go much too much longer on this tape, but I want to make sure that I have it delivered to you as coherently as I can because it is a lecture and I can't hear your questions, but he is received by his audience in all four Gospels, he is received as king. They recognize when he comes into the city, they recognize that he is coming to be the shepherd of Israel, and they welcome him, they shout to him, Hosanna, they lay down palm trees, palm trees, palm branches in his path. I've forgotten now which of the Maccabean kings, one of the latter ones when he comes to Jerusalem, he comes like this, and the audience recognized that he was presenting himself as king of Israel, and in the book of Maccabees, one of the three books, it specifically tells that they welcomed him saying, Hosanna, and they laid down palm trees, palm branches, excuse me, and welcomed him as king of Israel.

When Jesus came in on the donkey, then, it's so important for me to say to you this was not an anti-royal statement. He was not coming humbly as if he wasn't a king; he was coming in as the king of Israel, and the audience recognized that, and they welcomed him gladly as king of Israel. It was apparently when he failed by their values to become the king of Israel that they rejected him. Pilate made a direct connection to the royal announcement of himself as king, Pilate recognized that and had it written on the top of the cross, king of the Jews, in mocking his claim to be the king.

Now, we know from a Christian perspective that Jesus came to be king of Israel, but king of another kind, but what I would suggest to us is that by coming in on the donkey, he was appealing to the two ancient practices of kings to be their provider and their protector. He would provide for them, not just green pastures and still waters. He would provide for them the bread of life. He came not just to protect them from enemies, but to protect them permanently by providing for them eternal life.

As shepherd of Israel, Jesus came to provide and protect in the classic ways that kings would have done in the Old Testament. Jesus, however, provided not just as a king who would live for 40 years and then die, he came to provide and protect for them in eternal ways. So, what he used is the ancient constructs of kingship to describe the nature of his kingship, which was kingship, but kingship that provided for his subjects eternally.

So, with that background in mind, we can turn our attention to a relatively quick look at John chapter 10 in the New Testament. Before we would get to John, let me remind you that in Matthew, Jesus is also called the shepherd of Israel. There's so much to learn about the Bible.

I have been studying this book for 50 years and honestly, I just have scratched the surface. It's endlessly intriguing as it reveals to us not only who God is but what God does. So, in John chapter 10, John introduces Jesus in a dramatic fashion because Jesus is both the new Moses and the new Moses, but the new Moses is now God.

So, if I could turn your attention quickly to John chapter 1, as John presents to us the identity of Israel's Messiah, he presents him in ways that are radically different seemingly. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God, and he proceeds to give us a doxology that takes us back to creation. So, as he talks about Jesus being the Word, John makes it very clear that this is Jesus is; the current Jesus is the Word who was created in Genesis 1 and 2. Having made that point, he then proceeds to say, but as many as received him, to them he gave the right, in verse 12, to become children of God.

It's a terminology that appears only here in John, to those who believe in his name. Of course, the name Jesus means he will save. Who are born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And then John wants you to understand who the Messiah of Israel is. In verse 14, the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. John creates a word here; it's the noun form tabernacle, and he turns it into a verb.

And he tabernacled amongst us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. Well, what John is doing here is not visible; I've done a lot of work on this; what he is doing is talking about Moses. And readers of the English Bible can be forgiven if they don't see the connection.

But in fact, he tabernacled amongst us, and John says, we beheld his glory, as of the only begotten, full of grace and truth. Well, you might remember in the story of Moses, when Moses has his most intimate moment with God, Moses climaxes that moment by saying to God, show me your glory. And God says to Moses, in response to that question, God says, well, you can't see my glory.

So instead, what God reveals to him, if the passage is back in Exodus 33 and 34, specifically in chapter 34 of Exodus, there God says that he puts him in a cleft of the rock, and then he parades past him, his attributes, and then explains to him in Exodus 34, 6 and 7, the meaning of the divine name. So he gives to him the famous creed of the Old Testament about God and reveals that his glory is revealed in his name. And now John is revealing that in the person of Jesus Christ.

So what John is doing in chapter 1, to make a long story short, what he's doing is he has set the stage for all of the gospel by revealing to us that Jesus is the new Moses. He's the new king. He's the new Moses, who is also the incarnate God.

It is a breathtaking revelation right here, and it sets the stage, therefore, for what John wants us to understand about the identity of Israel's Messiah. And his identity is that he is Moses and David, but he is also God incarnate. And that is the exact message that Jesus will use, that John will use throughout the gospel, as evidenced by the fact that he refers to himself as the Great I Am.

It is revelatory. Therefore, in John's gospel, John has, I think, as his primary goal to reveal not just who Jesus is, he is the new Moses and God in the flesh, but what this new Moses can do for us that the old Moses did, but did in lesser ways than what the new Moses can do. So, with that in mind, we can set the stage then for John chapter 10, and we'll probably take a and prepare for the John 10 lecture in the next class hour. But in John chapter 10, what Jesus is doing is utilizing the shepherd metaphor to reveal himself as the God-King of the new era.

So, before we do that, let me just tell you, and then maybe we'll finish our break here. John 10 has in front of it the longest healing chapter in the entire New Testament, indeed, for that matter of fact, the entire Bible. All of the chapters is given over to the description of the healing of the blind man.

Then, in chapter 10, Jesus reveals himself as the God of Israel. You might remember back in Isaiah 61 that the coming figure would heal the blind. Go back and read Isaiah 42, and you'll say that there, the Messiah is the healer of the blind.

And in Matthew, Jesus does the same thing when John the Baptist is in jail and he's about to die, so he has his disciples go to Jesus and ask him, are you really the Messiah, or should we expect somebody else? Jesus says, go tell John what you see. The dead are raised, and the blind are healed. Well, Israel's King Messiah has as his activity the being who will heal the blind.

Devoting the whole ninth chapter to the healing of the blind is the crucial background for chapter 10, in which Jesus is pictured as the Good Shepherd. With that background in mind, perhaps I've set the stage for our next lecture, which can focus exclusively on the Good Shepherd passage of John 10. Then, we can finish up the language of release that we started out in previous lectures.

Thank you so much for your attention.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session

8, Sheperd King.