

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 12, John 10:1-42

6-Min. Video Overview

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You know, when we hear the story of the Good Shepherd from John chapter 10, most of us probably picture something really gentle, right? Comforting. But what if I told you that's not the real story at all? What if, hidden in plain sight, this is actually one of the most intense, in-your-face confrontations in the entire New Testament? Well, let's dig in and uncover the story you might not know. So yeah, the popular view is definitely warm and fuzzy.

But according to scholar Dr. David Turner, when you actually look at the context, you get something totally different. He calls it a story that's hot and jagged, just filled with conflict and sharp accusations. So how in the world do we get from a gentle shepherd to a tense, almost violent showdown? Alright, to really see this hot and jagged side of the story, we've got to understand its setting.

This wasn't some standalone sermon meant to make everyone feel good. No, this was the explosive peak of an argument that had been brewing for a while. And the key here is all about the timing.

John chapter 10 doesn't just start out of the blue. It picks up immediately, and I mean literally the very next sentence, after John 9 ends. And what just happened? Jesus was in a superheated dispute with the Pharisees about healing a man born blind.

There's no break, no scene change. He's talking to the exact same people he just called spiritually blind. And this quote from Dr. Turner really just nails it.

This isn't mainly a feel-good message for the flock. It's a direct prophetic jab aimed squarely at the religious leaders standing right in front of him. Jesus is grabbing this image of a shepherd to basically accuse them of being terrible at their jobs.

So to get the full impact of what Jesus is doing, we have to unpack this whole shepherd metaphor. Because this wasn't just some simple story. For everyone listening, this was a deeply symbolic, and honestly, a politically charged image.

You see, Jesus wasn't just pulling this image out of thin air. Everyone there knew Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. But they also knew the writings of the prophets, guys like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who used this exact same metaphor to call out corrupt kings and priests.

They called them bad shepherds who used and abandoned God's people. So the second Jesus starts talking about shepherds, his audience is already thinking about good versus bad leaders. So let's break down the players in this little drama.

The lines are drawn so clearly. Jesus, of course, is the good shepherd, the true rightful leader. The people of Israel, they're the sheep.

And the thieves and the hired hands who run away at the first sign of trouble. Well, that's his not-so-subtle shot at the Pharisees he's looking right at. And the wolf that represents the ultimate danger: Satan.

And then he adds another layer. He's not just the shepherd. He's also the door.

He's claiming to be the only legitimate way into God's flock. Anyone else who tries to get in another way? They're a thief and a robber. I mean, this is an incredibly bold claim that completely challenges the authority of the entire religious system.

Now, after Jesus lays all this out, you'd think things would just explode right then and there, right? But what happens next is actually really surprising. The conflict just goes quiet, and it lets all that tension just simmer under the surface for months. Look at this timeline.

It really shows how things build. Jesus gives this big speech during the Feast of Booths, which is in the fall, and then crickets. There's a gap of more than two months.

The story doesn't pick back up until winter during the Festival of Dedication, what we know today as Hanukkah. Can you just imagine those leaders stewing over his words, his accusations for all that time? So after a couple of months of all this simmering tension, the conflict finally- and I mean finally boils over. The setting shifts to the winter festival, Hanukkah, for the ultimate showdown right in the temple itself.

Okay, picture this. It's winter, and they're in Solomon's Colonnade, which is this covered walkway inside the temple area. The text says the religious leaders gathered around him, and you just get this feeling that he's being cornered, that they're setting a trap.

They are done with the metaphors. They're done with the stories. They issue a direct challenge.

How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. They want a straight answer, one they can use against him. And, well, Jesus is about to give them one.

He doesn't just say, yep, I'm the Messiah. He goes way, way further than that. He looks at these leaders who have been questioning him for months, and he declares, I am the Father, are one.

This right here, this is the absolute climax of the whole conflict. And the response? Whoa. It is immediate, and it is violent.

They know exactly what he's claiming. They pick up stones right then and there in the temple to execute him. This isn't a theological debate anymore.

In their minds, he's just committed a capital crime. And they spell it out crystal clear. They say they're not stoning him for his good works or even for claiming to be the Messiah.

They say it's for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God. There is zero ambiguity here. They understood his claim as a direct claim to be fully divine.

But here's the thing. Even with stones in their hands, ready to kill him, Jesus isn't finished. He doesn't back down.

Instead, he pushes back, and he launches this incredible defense of his claim using the one authority they just can't argue with – their own scriptures. This is just a masterclass in debate. He quotes Psalm 82, where God himself calls human judges gods because they carry out his judgment.

His logic is absolutely airtight. First, he gives them the premise from their own law. Second, he reminds them of its authority.

Scripture cannot be broken. And then he lands the knockout punch. His point is, if your own scripture calls flawed, human men gods for doing God's work, why are you accusing me, the one the Father chose and sent, of blasphemy for simply calling myself God's son? So does he take it back? Does he soften the blow? Not a chance.

He doubles down. He finishes his whole defense by restating his perfect unity with God. And of course, this just makes them even more furious.

And they try again to grab him. But he slips away. So when you peel it all back, the story of the Good Shepherd is so much more than a comforting little tale.

It's a hot and jagged story about identity, about authority, and about a divine claim so radical it almost got him killed on the spot. It forces everyone who hears it to make a decision. The leaders in the temple that day certainly made their choice.

And the story leaves us with the exact same question. What's yours?