

**Russell Kelfer**

# **I AM the Door of the Sheep**

**#1126-A**

**Series: Making the Spiritual Switch**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# I AM the Door of the Sheep

*Our gracious, loving, precious God, King of kings, Lord of lords, tiny baby in a manger, God on a cross, Savior in the heavenlies making intercession, soon-coming King, Jesus, sweetest Name we know, we worship You this morning. We come into Your presence with thanksgiving and into Your gates with praise. Our hearts are lifted into the heavenlies as we mention that Name; that Name that is above every name; that Name before which one day, every knee will bow, every tongue confess, Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. We proclaim it this morning from the depths of our hearts. Jesus Christ is Lord, and may He ever be so in our hearts.*

*We come this morning, Father, and we humble ourselves in Your presence with acknowledgement that only You can teach us, but we need to be taught that only You have truth; that apart from You we can do nothing, but that we can do all things through Christ. And so, we open our hearts to You this morning, Father, and ask that Your sweet Spirit would take the truth of the word, feed it to our hungry, needy souls, and change us more perfectly into Your likeness.*

*As we leave this place this morning, Father, may we be different because we have been with You. We give our hearts to You now, and ask You to take control.*

*In Jesus Name,*

*Amen.*

Question—when we start with a question and we sometimes wake up. Question—how long has television been around? How many of you think fifty years? Sixty years? Forty years? I don't know years? Well, I'll tell you, it's been around longer than you think. Now, I know that Cain didn't get his idea to kill Abel from watching "Law and Order", and I don't think the RBC (The Roman Broadcasting Company) really televised the chariot races, but it's

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been around a long time. In fact, in its purest state, television has always been around, because in essence, what television does, is take thoughts or experiences and make them visual. A television program simply takes what happens in life and portrays it so you can see it happening.

So, in reality the human brain then, was the first television set. So, it's been around a long time. God designed in each human brain, a solid-state processor. Now, mine is only about three megahertz, but some of you have faster ones and some of us have a few loose transistors. I understand, but that television set in our brain was designed in such a way, that *even with our eyes closed*, we can visualize events and experiences *as though they were happening*. We do that when we dream. We do that when somebody describes something to us. I'll give you an example. This is dangerous; I know how dangerous it is. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes. Now, some of you are going to come back in a little while, but at any rate, have a nice rest. Close your eyes; I want to use your imagination. I'm going to describe something to you and I want you to picture it in your mind, even though you're not there. I want you to picture a beautiful mountain with a snow-capped tip, a hillside covered with majestic trees coming down the side of it; a crystal-clear river winds down through those trees to a beautiful mountain lake at the bottom. Can you see it? Some of you have gone fishing already. You can feel a cool mountain breeze blow against your face, soft white clouds overhead. Now listen carefully, you can hear the wind rushing through the trees. And if you look just over to one side you can see a beautiful bird land in a tree on your left. It's bright red. Look at the color of its wings. And there's a squirrel over there running up a tree with something in its mouth. Can you see it?

Well, that's enough of that. Some of you can open your eyes now. But if the TV set that God put in your brain isn't totally malfunctioning, you just came back from a trip to the mountains. You never moved an inch, but depending on the sensitivity of your imagination, and *whether or not you had ever seen a mountain stream*, God transported you through the miracle of the television set that's placed in your brain to a place and a time totally different from where you are. That's television. It's built into the human brain. Its waves enter the brain through any of the senses. This is even more dangerous. If you were to smell a donut, and I hate for you to think about that right now, you could

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all but see it when you smell it, right? You can all but taste it. See a picture of dog howling, and you can almost hear it. Read a story about a snowstorm, and you begin to get cold.

You see, God's television set is there for a reason. It is there so that you and I can see, hear, smell, and touch things in the physical world, and *instantly* make the "spiritual switch"; our minds transported to another world; our hearts opened to real truth. That is why Jesus taught in parables. He drew word pictures, and those pictures immediately brought visual images to the minds of the hearers—images that could be translated into spiritual principles using that television set in your brain.

That's what we're looking at in this study. We're going to begin looking at one of those word pictures, this morning, that Jesus drew on the sands of time to develop an image that, when processed, would allow us to really visualize the nature of God and the nature of man and the purpose of God's coming to earth. And it's all found, or a lot of it is found at least, in John, chapter ten. We will look at that for a week or two. And it's especially vivid to His hearers, the Jews, because the image He was drawing was so terribly familiar to them. Jesus did that, you know.

The passage begins in John 10:1. I'll read it to you; it's an incredible passage.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. [They didn't have a clue.]

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. (John 10:1-7)

### THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

The story seems to begin in verse one, but it really can't begin in verse one, because verse one begins "Verily, verily", and in John's gospel, he never used that phrase to introduce a new thought, it was always a phrase that brought two thoughts together. And in this case, it is a continuation of the conversation in chapter nine which arose out of the healing of the blind man.

The Pharisees were attempting to explain away the miracle. They said in verse 24, Jesus was a sinner; He couldn't do miracles like that. And in verse 29 they said, well *God did speak through Moses, but they had no idea who this fellow Jesus was*, so a confrontation took place. These Pharisees were trying to pass themselves off as God's representatives of the time, and they were trying to put Jesus in the category of being an impostor.

So, Jesus had the stage set for a major spiritual battle. Who was going to represent God on planet earth—these Pharisees or Jesus? The Pharisees had disputed Jesus' claims to *be God*. They had written Him off as a troublemaker. They were fearful of His power; they were threatened by his following and the disciples were caught in the middle of all this. They were awed by Jesus' miracles but they were taken back by the fact that He had been rejected by the spiritual authorities. So, Jesus determined to use this incident as a backdrop to explain not only who He was, but to define the Kingdom. So, once again, He made the "spiritual switch". He created out of His Book of Life, illustrations, and came up with something that was suited for the occasion, and He used something that God had designed in eternity past for this purpose, sheep and shepherds.

So, you have the story behind the story. The reason for the illustration was the incident. The reason for the incident was this tension between the Jewish hierarchy and the king, and so the stage is set for the story of the Good Shepherd.

### THE STORY ITSELF

We read the story a minute ago. It appears to be nothing more than a brief summation of the care and keeping of sheep and the role and the responsibilities of shepherds. If you were looking at an animal encyclopedia, you would probably find it under "sheep/shepherd relationships", or something. On the surface it just seemed to be a simple, really unnecessary explanation of

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things that the people in Israel had always taken for granted. So, there might be a temptation to ignore what Jesus was saying. I mean, these guys didn't even know what He was talking about. "Sheep, shepherd, we know all this stuff. Come on, Jesus. Teach us!"

I want you to use your spiritual imagination this morning, and imagine that you are walking alongside Jesus, listening to His every word, waiting for some profoundly deep spiritual, theological gem to pour from His lips. Suddenly He turns around, asks you to pay close attention to what He's about to say. So, you listen.

Now, let's listen one more time. I'm going to paraphrase it for you, Jesus turns around and says, "Guys, I want you to listen to what I have to say." "Okay. This is it! He's going to give us some great lecture on eschatology or something." And this is what He said. He said, "Guys listen."

Anyone refusing to walk through the gate into a sheepfold, who sneaks over the wall, must be a thief! [I beg your pardon?]

For a true shepherd comes through the gate.

The gatekeeper opens the gate, the sheep hear His voice and they come to him. He calls to them; He calls them by name; by their own names, and He leads them out.

He walks ahead of them; and they follow him, because they recognize His voice.

They won't follow a stranger; they don't recognize his voice.

Those who heard Jesus use this illustration, it says next, didn't understand what He meant.

So, He said to them, "I AM" and I AM the door."

(John 10:1-7 Paraphrased)

Now I will have to admit to you, on the surface it *really* sounds a little bit like a story out of a children's story book. It hardly sounds like something of such depth that God would come to earth, call a group of guys together, tell them to sit down, sit still and listen, and tell them this story. But you see, the profundity of the gospel lies in its utter simplicity. The mystery of the gospel lies in the fact that only those with ears to hear can understand anything that simple. Man does not naturally comprehend simplicity. You think about it.

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Man's whole objective in life is to make the simple complicated so he's needed to explain it. If you don't believe it, you read some of today's educational materials or some of today's religious teaching materials and see what complicated names and definitions we have given to relatively simple truths in order to make them complicated. God's way is utter simplicity. Man's way is utter confusion. Jesus' disciples weren't yet tuned into the simple gospel and thus couldn't make the "spiritual switch". All they heard was a first-grade story about a herd of sheep, a faithful shepherd, and some big, bad mean guys who were trying to climb over the wall and steal those nice sheep. You can almost hear Peter nudging the other disciples and saying, "Gimme a break. Let's have some heavy theology, Lord...enough of this story-time stuff."

### THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Jesus understood they had a veil over their eyes, so He proceeded to explain what He said. He almost always that. And He almost always gave them a cast of characters so they would know what He was talking about. Nearly every time He was in the cast as one of the characters. And usually, the Father or the Holy Spirit was found in the story and virtually always, Satan was involved. It's almost always the same cast. And you say, "Why?" And He would say to you, "Because these are spiritual messages about things that happen in the spirit world, and there aren't that many people when you think about it. There is the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the holy angels, Satan and his demonic host."

So, in virtually in every one of the parables or stories that Jesus told, the cast of characters was similar. Now He gave them different names in this story. There was:

The sheep	The thief or robber
The Shepherd	The stranger
The gatekeeper	The other sheep

Jesus will identify those as we go along, but this morning, we are going to focus on one character in particular, that's a highly unlikely one.

### THE EXPLANATION OF THE STORY

So, now begins the explanation. Jesus finishes telling the

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story. He looks around, and these guys look, well, a little bit like you look this morning...kind of like...okay? And the Scripture says, those who heard what He said, didn't understand what He meant. I can relate to that.

This team of theological geniuses to whom He was about to commit the task of evangelizing the world, scratched their heads and looked at one another as though Jesus had just spoken in English or some other unknown language. And the expression on their faces would have led to one of those "how many disciples does it take to put in a light bulb?" (Jokes—you know, one to hold the bulb; eleven to turn the ladder). That type of thing. Or one of those Abbott and Costello movies, "Who's on first?" They not only didn't get the picture; they didn't even get the sound.

So, Jesus sat down and explained what He meant. He opened the door of the human heart to a series of truths that were so profound that even today, 2,000 years later, the most educated minds of our day bow in adoration at the depth that comes out of this very simple story. Let's begin where Jesus began, with an explanation of the door to the sheepfold; and we are going find to our amazement that the "Door" is a person.

### THE DOOR TO THE SHEEPFOLD

The door plays a big part in this story. Now listen, if you will. Normally, you wouldn't expect something seemingly inanimate like a door, to be the lead person in a story; something just as an opening for sheep to come in and out, but it was. Now, Jesus made three succinct statements about the door:

- 1- He that does not enter by the door is a thief or robber. Not maybe, that's true. That's a fact. (verse 1)
- 2- He that enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (verse 2)
- 3- Jesus said *I am the door*. (verses 7, 9)

Now those are three statements, two of which probably would never make the front page of "The Jerusalem Times". But, the third one was big news, and the people listening knew it was big news.

You see, there was more than one kind of sheepfold in Jesus' day. In the villages and in the towns, they had what were called communal sheepfolds where all the village flocks were sheltered



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and kept when they returned home at night. They were protected by a strong door, and only the guardian of the door had the key. But when the sheep were out on the hills in the warm season, and they could not return at night to the village, they were collected into sheepfolds, which were really just open spaces surrounded by a wall. In the wall was an opening by which the sheep came in and went out, but there was no door. Instead, at night, the shepherd himself, would lay down across the opening and no sheep could get in or out unless they walked over *his body, which they wouldn't do*. But, in the same way, no enemy could get in and attack the sheep without doing the same thing.

So, in the most literal sense, the shepherd *became the door*. There was no access to the sheepfold *except through him*. Then Jesus looked at them and He said, "I AM the I AM. And I AM is The Door". There are two incredibly vital principles and we'll be looking at one this morning, and one at a later time, but you have to visualize *both of these sheepfolds* to grasp them.

The first is the concept of exclusive salvation. The village sheepfold portrays this truth. It is a picture of limited access to safety. There would only be one way to get in. Jesus finalized it in John 14. Do you remember? He said:

Jesus saith unto him, I AM (is) The Way...no man cometh to  
the Father, but by Me. (John 14:6)

The second principle we will get to in a week or two, is the concept of eternal security. It is portrayed by the country sheepfold. The first one says there would be only one way in; the second one says there would be no way out.

The issue of limited access to God is a crucial one. It immediately not only further accentuated the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, it finalized it. Jesus was saying there would be no room for negotiation at this one point. He not only represented Himself to be a way to God, He affirmed Himself once and for all to be *the only way to God*. Either He was telling the truth, or He was lying, and they had to make a choice. The lines were drawn. If what He said was true, no Jew, not even a Pharisee, could stand in the presence of the Father, ever, unless they went *through the Son*.

It means that no well-meaning Mormon, or member of any other cult which represents Jesus to be less than Savior and Lord, can ever see the Father, without coming God's way. It isn't

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of consequence how humble he is, how religious he is, how moral he is, how zealous he is. What Jesus is saying is, “You can’t enter the sheepfold except by way of The Door. And then He said, “I AM The Door.” Be sure you understand that. I know that’s hard.

It means no follower of Buddha or Allah or any other false prophet will ever see God without coming to Christ. It doesn’t matter if they are a high priest, low priest, or no priest. It means that no member of any Christian church who has never come to Christ on God’s terms, by way of the cross, will ever see God. That’s what it means. They can be deacon, deaconess, pastor or priest. It really doesn’t matter *who they are; it doesn’t matter what they are*. All that matters is whether or not they have entered by way of The Door. And Jesus *is The Door*. He isn’t the one who points *to the door; He is The Door. There is a tremendous difference*.

You either come *through Him*, or you don’t come at all. *Not to Him*, through Him. The difference is vital. You can come *to Him* by simply learning all there is to know *about Him* and acknowledging His existence, even acknowledging His existence as God. But until you come *through Him*, until you give Him the title to your life and agree that *He alone is your access to God*, you’re outside of the sheepfold. And my friend, you can stand outside the sheepfold all day long and admire the shepherd and even fellowship with the sheep; but *until you enter in by way of The Door*, you’re not in.

If you try to enter in *any other way*, Jesus said you a thief or a robber. A thief is subtle; a robber is dangerous; but both are criminals. And both are lost. You say, “But what a *narrow gospel*”. How many of you think it’s a narrow gospel? Well, I’ll tell you what, Jesus did. In Matthew 7:13, He said, “Let Me just explain it to you so you won’t be so dumbfounded when you begin to figure it out.”

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be [bunches] which go in thereat [big crowd; it looked like the mall at Christmas]:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

(Matthew 7:13-14)

That’s God’s own definition of the gospel. It is narrow, it’s

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restricted by conviction, it's limited by absolutes, and *because of that*, not too many will make that choice. But on the other hand, the gate that leads to an eternal hell is broad, convenient, easy to enter. In fact, you don't have to make very many choices; you just kind of wander and you end up there. Many, many people, the Scripture says will make that choice, but it is a choice, because you can enter either gate. You can follow the crowd or you can follow Christ.

You say, "But what about the Jew?" Well, that's who Jesus was talking to in this passage. Yes, the Jews are God's chosen people, but as a people, when they rejected His Son, the gospel became a *universal gospel*, and *now*, whosoever will may come. Now there is no difference—Jew or Gentile, slave or free; all come through the same gate—the gate to the sheepfold.

Personally, I am a Jew. All Jew. I was born a Jew. Both of my parents and all of my grandparents are Jewish. But until the day I invited the Lord Jesus Christ to come into my heart and forgive my sins and transform my life, *I was a lost Jew*. I had no peace, I had no hope, I had no personal relationship with the Living God. I had not entered in by the New and Living Way. I was not a child of God.

And I say this to those of you here this morning; I say it to those listening on tape or on the radio, whatever it might be, if you have never given your life to Jesus Christ, personally, the same thing is true of you. Male or female, Jew or Gentile, religious or non-religious, you are outside the fold; you have not entered by way of the door; you are *not a Christian*. You may be Christianized, but you are not regenerated. And living in America and belonging to a Christian church does not make you a Christian any more than eating pizza makes you an Italian. If you want to be an Italian, you either have to be born there, or you have to become a naturalized citizen using their rules, not yours.

To become a child of God, you have to understand that God does not accept you *or reject you* based upon anything you have done or haven't done. You were born in sin, and you began to sin the minute you became old enough to make your own decisions. And Scripture teaches, a Holy God cannot co-exist with sin. So, the minute you sinned, you separated yourself from the Presence of God; you became (and here's that word we don't like) you became *lost*.

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Once you understand that you are lost, you have to decide to be found, to be saved. It is a choice. It is not something *that just happens* because you feel attracted to people or to a church where a lot of people seem to know a lot about God. Salvation is not the result of environment, but of choice. And that choice involves more than a casual assent to the claims of Christ; it requires something known as repentance—the deliberate decision to turn from one god to another. Until you give your heart to Christ, the Bible teaches, that whether you like it or not, whether you know it or not, whether you are conscious of it or not, you basically, are a child of the enemy. Jesus said it in John 8:44.

Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father  
ye will do. (John 8:44)

It's hard. Nothing you can do can earn your way back to God. You are hopelessly lost unless *He does something*. But He did it. He sent His only Son to pay the price, to die in your place, so that *simply by receiving Him and allowing Him to enter your life, making you new from the inside out*, you can have a quality called eternal life...something that is totally new, totally different, and has no end.

Beloved, anything else is not salvation. It need not be a “Damascus Road” experience like Paul had; it may only be a quiet, relinquishing of the reins of your life, but beloved, the Scripture says it with no apologies: Except a man be born again, *He cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3)*.

Do you want to see your friends come to Christ? Ask them this question, in love. And I ask it of you this morning, have *you* been born again? Has there ever been a time when you consciously accepted the free gift of salvation, and *personally invited Jesus Christ to come into your heart?*

If you haven't or *if you're not sure*, you may be a thief or a robber. You may be consciously or unconsciously trying to enter the sheepfold without going through the door. And you can't. The enemy may be whispering in your ear, “But look at all the things you've done for God; look how active you've been; look how religious you are. The people at your church think you built the church.”

Beloved, Jesus answers:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter  
into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my

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Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

And then will I profess unto them, [yes, but] I never knew you:  
(Matthew 7:21-23)

Jesus defined what He meant, *he that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven*, in John 6. Lest we try to attach any other meaning to it, He said:

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:40)

I encourage you this morning, all who may be within the sound of my voice, to examine your heart and just quietly determine whether or not you have ever entered the sheepfold by way of The Door. Have you been born again? If there is *any doubt*, you can open your heart this morning, wherever you might be, and you can invite Jesus to cleanse you, and forgive you, and redeem you, and deliver you from the penalty of sin forever.

I have given you a prayer of faith that you can pray. It's written in your transcript. But you can just say something to God like this:

### A Prayer of Faith

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*I am a sinner. I acknowledge it, and those sins have put a wall between me and You; I'm separated from You, and I realize that.*

*I realize that You died on that cross for my sins and I am coming to You now and saying, come into my heart; cleanse my sins, take over my life and save me.*

*You did it all.*

*Thank you, Lord for saving me. Thank You that You live in my heart from now and forever more.*

*Amen.*

And there is a place on the back of the transcript for you to acknowledge it, if you have prayed that prayer. So when the enemy begins to whisper in your ear, you have a safeguard that says: On this date, I asked Jesus to come into my life. I asked to

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enter the sheepfold through The Door, and He gave me eternal life.

What church you join, or don't join or come to, or don't go to, is your business. But God will direct you. But what Kingdom you belong to, beloved, is serious business, and God cares. He cared enough to send His only Son to pay the price for your sins. And today He stands at the opening of His sheepfold, and He says to each of us...

I AM the door. If anyone enters by Me, he shall [not might]  
he shall be saved, (John 10:9a NKJV)

The "anyone" includes you.

The "today" is today.

And the "decision" is yours.

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I AM The Door to the sheepfold  
They heard the Master say.  
No one can ever enter  
Coming another way.

And if I AM The Door to the sheepfold  
Each of you ought to see,  
That anyone climbing over the wall  
A thief or a robber must be.

I AM The Door, The Only Door  
There is limited access, that's true.  
But do not forget, dear blessed sheep  
I have saved a place for you.

My Father gave the sheep to Me  
And I will leave them never.  
Those who come by way of The Door  
Will belong to Him forever.

Oh, dear child, dear wandering sheep  
God's call, do not ignore.  
Come dear child to the sheepfold  
But you must come in at The Door.

Let's pray.

*Our loving God, what a simple gospel, and yet, how profound. We don't need a great deal of theological*

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*information to understand the simple truth. You died for us to forgive us, to live in us, to save us. But we must come by way of The Door.*

*And some of us, Father, may be struggling because we are so filled with this religious self-importance in our lives, that we cannot imagine a need for something as simple as repentance. Dear God, only Your Spirit can explain it to us.*

*Some, like the disciples, may be saying today, "But Lord, I don't understand." That is your job, Father, please make it clear.*

*And as we leave this place this morning, Father, there may be many of us who have friends and neighbors and relatives we will be spending time with in the next few weeks, who may or not be religious, who may or may not be Christianized, but who perhaps, do not understand The Door to the sheepfold. By Your grace, may the utter simplicity of it, not rob us of our responsibility to share the utter wonder of it. And may we do that, by faith.*

*Thank You, Father, for making it so simple and so wonderful.*

*In Jesus' Name, amen.*

### A Challenge to Further Study

1- Imagine that you are following Jesus as He begins His dissertation on the sheepfold. What questions would you have asked had you been given the opportunity?

2- Find the significance of the following phrases and find other verses that correspond to these thoughts:

- a- "The Door"
- b- "thief"
- c- "robber"
- d- "His Voice"
- e- "by name"
- f- "leadeth them out"
- g- "He goeth before them"
- h- "the voice of strangers"
- i- "they understood not"

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A Challenge to Further Application

1- What was the battle that was shaping up in Jesus' ministry as He began to explain this parable? Why was His taking the role of "The Door" so crucial? Why is it so crucial to you? To those with whom you share your faith?

2- Put this story in your own words (paraphrase it). Use, if need be, a setting more familiar than a sheepfold. How would you use that story to teach others who Jesus is?

3- If Jesus were "a door" instead of "The Door", this story would be easier for other religious groups to accept. What is there about Jesus that makes any other explanation impossible?

A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize John 10:7

A place to acknowledge your prayer of faith:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

On this date, \_\_\_\_\_ I asked Jesus Christ to come into my life. I asked to enter the sheepfold through The Living Door, and He welcomed me with open arms, forgave my sins, and promised me eternal life.

Whenever I begin to doubt, I will look at this prayer, remember this moment, and thank God that I have been redeemed.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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