THE GOOD SHEPHERD**********THIEVES AND ROBBERS
JOHN 10

Why would Jesus make these statements about hirelings,thieves,and robbers? Why would he give these warnings? Let us search the scriptures and see.

The Lord is our good shepherd.But he warns us there will be hirelings who will pose as shepherds.

Have you ever heard of such a thing as hired shepherds in the Lord's flock? The earth is full of hirelings.They are the rule,today,rather than the exception.

Let's clarify,first of all,just who are the prophets? Some people think thatprophets are just people who can foretell the future.But this is not the bible defination.Of course the prophet,in teaching God's word,will foretell the future,where God's word has revealed it to us.But this isn't all he does.Paul tells us in 1 Cor.14:3,"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification,and exhortation,and comfort." So a prophet is anyone who speaks unto men to teach or comfort them.Paul also tells us how we can be sure we are listening to the true prophets of the Lord.1 Cor.14:37,"If any man think himself to be a prophet,or spiritual,let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Soany time a preacher teaches something he cannot quote book,chapter,and verse for,he is neither a true prophet,nor even a spiritual man.We are not to listen to him. Paul gives us further instructions on how we can be sure of the preacher,or teacher we hear:Acts 17:11,"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,and searched the scriptures daily,whether those things were so." I want you to notice that these people were noble because they were willing to hear these new things about Christ that Paul was preaching to them.But they searched the scriptures daily,whether those things were so.We must do the same today,if we do not want to be deceived.It is noble to check up on every preacher or teacher all prophets you hear.And it is safe.

But someone asks,why are these false prophets allowed in the church? Paul answers that question also;1 Cor.11:19,"For there must be also heresies among you,that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." So it is to prove who are the noble ones.Who loves the word of truth more than man's way. "That the approved may be made manifest among us."

But going on with our lesson:The Lord says the business of a shepherd is to feed the flock.Ezek.34:1-6 & 10,"And the word of the Lord came unto me saying,son of man prophesy against the prophets of Israel,prophesy,and say unto them,thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds:woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves;should not the shepherds feed the flock? ye eat the fat,and ye clothe you with wool,ye kill them that are fed:but ye feed not the flock.The diseased have ye not strengthened,neither have ye healed that which was sick,neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away,neither have ye sought that which was lost;but with force and cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered because there was no shepherd:and they became meat to all the beasts of the field,and they were scattered.My sheep wandered through all the mountains,and upon every high hill:yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth,and none did search or seek after them." "Thus saith the Lord God;behold,I am against the shepherds;and I will require my flock at their hand,and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more;for I will deliver my flock from their mouth,that they may not be meat for them." So these hirelings failed in all the duties of a shepherd.And even caused the death of the sheep they did feed:because instead of the word of God,they fed them the doctrines,commandments and interpretations of men.

Who in the church today,do we look to to feed the flock? Jesus said in Matth.4:4,"It is written,man shall not live by bread alone,but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So the teachers and leaders of the church are doing the work of shepherds;are any of these today hirelings? Do we have any elders,pastors,or preachers today,who feed the flock for a set salary? Then they are hirelings.And the Lord tells us that this type of shepherd is not dependable.Jno.10:12-13;"But he that is a hireling,and not the shepherd,whose own the sheep are not,seeth the wolf coming,and leaveth the sheep,and fleeth:and the wolf catcheth them,and scattereth them.The hireling fleeth,because he is a hireling,and careth not for the sheep.#

We have another set od men today who are seeking to take over the job of feeding the flock for hire.Our evangelists.We know that evangelists have

the job,primarily,to carry the gospel to the lost and dying world.In doing this he is to be fellowshipped,or helped financially and otherwise by the church.As Paul says in 2 Cor.10:16,"To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you---." And in Rom.15:20-21,"Yea,so I have strived to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named,lest I should build upon another man's foundation:but as it is written,to whom he was not spoken of,they shall see:and they that have not heard shall understand." This is the appointed sphere of the evangelist.But where do we find them laboring today? Always where there are established congregations of believers.Or where there are at least two or three believers and assured hire.Usually the amount must be satisfactory,before they will even consider going to preach for these believers.These are definately hirelings.They come under the head of prophets with a special mission:that of carrying the gospel to the lost and dying world.But the hire is good where there are established churches.So we find the sad picture of our evangelists attempting to be shepherds.Hireling shepherds at that.

The people of God had the same trouble back in old testament times. Micah 3:11,"The heads thereof judge for reward,and the priests thereof teach for hire,and the prophets divine for money:yet they lean upon the Lord,and say,is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us." But as the Lord warned,the hireling is not dependable.When they preach for money:they must teach to please the people who pay them.

Isa.30:8-11,"Now,go,write it before them in a table,and note it in a book,that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." So this is for us,also. "That it may be for the time to come forever and ever:that this is a rebellious children,children that will not hear the word of the Lord:which say to the seers,see not;and the prophets,prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things,prophesy deceits:get you out of the way,turn aside out of the path,cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." They wanted a doctrine preached that would please the hearers that were paying the hire.Not the plain word of God.

Jere.23:1-2,"Woe unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of the pasture,saith the Lord.Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel I am against the pastors that feed my people;ye have scattered the flock,and driven them away,and have not visited them,behold,I will visit upon you the evil of your doings,saith the Lord." verses 10-11,"For the land is full of adulterers;" The land today is full of spiritual adulterers:those who turn to the doctrines,commandments and interpretations of men,instead of the pure word of God.Also fleshly adulterers:there are many living in the Lord's church today,who are living in adulterous marriages.But to continue,"For because of swearing the land mourneth;the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up,and their course is evil,their force is not right.For both prophet and priest are profane.Yea,in mine own house have I found their wickedness,saith the Lord." A profane person is one who is not spiritual;worldly. And he says both the prophet and the priest are profane.This is also so today verses 14-17,"I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing they commit adultery,and walk in lies:they strengthen also the hands of the evil doers,and none return from his wickedness:they are all of them unto me as Sodom,and the inhabitants as Gomorrah.Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets;behold,I will feed them with wormwood,and make them drink the water of gall:for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.Thus saith the Lord of hosts,harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you:they make you vain:they speak a vision of their own heart,and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say unto them that despise me,the Lord hath said,ye shall have peace;and they say unto everyone that walketh after the imagination of his own heart,no evil shall come upon you." What are the horrible thingsthe Lord saw in the prophets of Jerusalem? Notice their prophets commit adultery, and strengthen the hands of evil doers.How many teachers and preachers do we have in the church today who have more than one living wife??? This is adultery.The Lord says to have this person as a prophet is a horrible thing. Yet leaders in the church tolerate it.The other thing the Lord found horrible was the prophets who strengthened the hands of evil doers,so that they did not return from their evil.How do they do this? By not condemning the evil they are commiting.Or if they do correct it at all,they do it so gently that the evil doer does not realize he has been corrected.There is a doctrine abroad in the church today,that you must not be hard on an evil doer,or you might hurt his feelings.Therefore he is not corrected;therefore he does not return from his evil.And the prophets in the church are responsible.They have strengthened his hands in this evil.

Verses 20-22," The anger of the Lord shall not return,until he have executed,and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart:in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." Notice that this is for the latter ddays;this is for us. "I have not sent these prophets,yet they ran:I have not spoken to them,yet they prophesied.But if they had stood in my counsel,and had caused my people to hear my words,then they should have turned from their evil way,and from the evil of their doings." verses 25-37,"I have heard what the prophets said,that prophesy lies in my name,saying,I have dreamed,I have dreamed." The prophets today also prophesy lies in his name.They say,times have progressed.This is a new era.Times have changed.I am educated.It is all the same as the old prophets lying,and saying,I have dreamed,I have dreamed. "How long shall this be in the hearts of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea,they are prophets of deceit of their own hearts,which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor,as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.The prophet that hath a dream,let him tell a dream;and he that hath my word,let him speak my word faithfully.What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord;and a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore behold,I am against the prophets,saith the Lord,that steal my words everyone from his neighbor." How can a prophet steal the words of the Lord from his neighbor? By speaking man's words and interpretations in the name of the Lord;and by with holding the pure,sincere word of God.That way he can steal the words of the Lord from the unlearned;and those who do not search the scriptures daily for the truth of what they hear. "Behold,I am against the prophets,saith the Lord,that use their tongues and say,he ssaith.Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams;saith the Lord, and do tell them,and cause my people to err by their lies,and by their lightness;yet I sent them not,nor commanded them:therefore they shall not profit this people at all,saith the Lord.And when this people,or the prophet,or a priest,shall ask thee,saying,what is the burden of the Lord? Thou shalt say unto them,what burden? I will even forsake you saith the Lord.As for the prophet,or a priest,and this people,that shallsay,the burden of the Lord,I will even punish that man and his house." No,to the true christian, the word;and service of the Lord is his joy;not a burden.What honor is it to the Lord,if you are obedient,and all the while complaining of the burden of the Lord? "Thus shall ye say every man to his neighbor,and every man to his brother,what hath the Lord answered? and what hath the Lord spoken? And the burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more:for every man's word shall be his burden;" yes in the end it will be the words of man you have followed that will prove to be a heavy burden,indeed.Not the word of the Lord. "For ye have perverted the words of the living God. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet,what hath the Lord answered thee? and,what hath the Lord spoken?" if the word of the Lord isn't perverted (changed) today,it never has been.but the perverted word will only prove a burden to us in the end.We must ask,and accept only,"What hath the Lord answered? and,what hath the Lord spoken?"

So the Lord says:Jere.50:6,"My people hath been lost sheep:their shepherds have caused them to stray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from hill to hill,they have forgotten their resting place." Yes the lost sheep,led astray,have forgotten that their resting place is in the word of God.And their shepherds have caused them to stray.They have fed them doctrines,commandments and interpretations of men instead of the word of God,until as it is recorded in Hosea 4:6,"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:because thou hast rejected knowledge,I also will reject thee---." And the pastors and prophets are to blame for this.Jesus said in Luke 11:52,"Woe unto you lawyers,for ye have taken away the key of knowledge:ye entered not in yourselves,and them that were entering ye hindered."

Why did the people of God allow this to happen? Why have they allowed it to happen to them today? read Isa.56:10-11,"His watchmen are blind:they are all ignorant,they are all dumb dogs,they cannot bark:sleeping,lying down,loving to slumber." So the watchmen he has placed on the walls of Zion to sound the warning of wolves and their false doctrines,have all become blind and ignorant.They love to lie down and sleep,leaving the Lord's flock to their enemies.They cannot bark,because if they did it might hurt the feelings of a wolf in sheep's clothing,and thus disturb the false peace. "Yea,they are greedy dogs which can never have enough,and they are shepherds that can xxxxxxxxx not understand:they look to their own way,everyoneto his own gain,from his own quarter." Hirelings,and others,looking first of all for his own gain,from his own quarter.Looking for ease;self-comfort;to look good to the world;and to avoid persecutions.

But there is a way out.As we read in the 10th chapter of john,Jesus

Christ is the good shepherd of the sheep.The Lord comforted his people in old testament times with prophesies of the good shepherd.Isa.40:10-11,"Behold the Lord God will come with a strong hand,and his arm shall rule for him:behold his reward is with him,and his work is before him.He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:he shall gather his lambs with his arm,and carry them in his bosom,and gently lead them that are with young." Also Ezek.34:11-20 & 23 & 31 "For thus saith the Lord God;behold,I,even I,will both search my sheep,and seek them out.As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered;so will I seek out my sheep,and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.And I will bring them out from the people,and gather them from the countries,and will bring them to their own land,and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers,and in all inhabited places of the country.I will feed them in a good pasture,and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be:and there shall they lie in a good fold,and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.I will feed my flock, and will cause them to lie down,saith the Lord God.I will seek that which was lost,and bring again that which was driven away,and bind up that which was broken,and will strengthen that which was sick:but I will destroy that which is fat and strong:I will feed them with judgement. As for you,O my flock,thus saith the Lord God;behold,I will judge between cattle and cattle, between rams and he goats.Seemeth it a small thing to you to have eaten up the good pasture,but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters,but you must foul the residue with your feet? As for my flock,they eat that which you havetrodden down with your feet;and they drink that which you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them;behold,I,evenI,will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.----And I will set up one shepherd over them,even my servant David;he shall be their shepherd.---And ye the flock of my pasture are men,and I am your God,saith the Lord God."

Deut.18:18-20,"I will raise up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee,and I will put my words in his mouth;and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not harken unto my words which he shall speak in my name,I will require it of him.But the prophet,which shall presume to speak a word in my name,which I have not commanded him to speak, or shall speak in the name of other gods,even that prophet shall die." We know that this was a prophesy of Christ,the good shepherd.2 Jno.10,says,"If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine,receive him not into your housemneither bid him godspeed!" The good shepherd says in Jno.6:63,"The words that I speak unto you,they are spirit,and they are life."

Heb.13:20-21,"Now the God of peace,that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ,that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of his everlasting covenant,make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight,throughkx Jesus Christ;to whom be glory forever amen." If we are perfect in every good work doing his will,that leaves out all the ideas of men.

Heb.2:1-3,"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard,lest at any time we should let them slip.For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast,and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;how shall we escape,if we neglect so great salvation;which at first began to be spoken by the Lord,and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." It is easy to let things slip if we don't constantly renew our minds by the study of God's word,and meditate on these things night and day.

Acts 20:26-32,"Paul tells all prophets how to keep themselves blameless: "Wherefore I take you to record this day,that I am pure from the blood of all men.For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves,and to all the flock,over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,to feed the church of God,which he hath purchased with his own blood.For I know,that after my departing shall grievious wolves enter in among you,not sparing the flock.Also of your own selves shall men arise,speaking perverse things,to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch,and remember,that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one of you night and day with tears.And now brethren,I commend youxx to God,&to the word of his grace,which is able to build you up,and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified." He had taught them all the counsel of God;and warned them that wolves in sheep's clothing would come in and try to deceive them.But he commended them to the word of God for

their ultimate salvation.This would be listening to the voice of the good shepherd,not to the voice of strangers.We always hear the voice of the good shepherd revealed in the word of God.A voice that does not quote the word of God,is the voice of a stranger.

We have another warning and description of our times in 2 Tim.4:3-4, FFor the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,having itching ears; and shall be turned unto fables." This is listening to the voice of strangers.The good shepherd said his sheep will not do this.

2 Pet.2:1-3,"But there were false prophets also among the people,even as there shall be false teachers among you,who privily shall bring in damnheresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,and shall bring upon themselves swift destruction.And many shall follow their pernicious ways;by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.And through covetousness shall they with feighned words make merchandise of you:" So hirelings as well as wolves will have a part in leading sheep astray.These are the thieves and robbers the Lord warned us of.

Paul assures us that there was no more gospel to be added to the things he taught.Gal.1:6-12,"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:which is not another; but there be some that trouble you,and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we,or an angel from heaven,preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you,let him be accursed.As we said before, so say we now again,if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received,let him be accursed.For do I now persuade men,or God? or do Iseek to please men? For if I yet pleased men,I should not be the servant of Christ."

Rom.15:18,"For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me,to make the Gentiles obedient,by word and deed.So following the voice of Paul,we follow the voice of the good shepherd;for he spoke only those things God gave to him to give to us.

Prov.19:27,"Cease,my son,to hear the instructions that causeth thee to err from the words of knowledge." More warning about listening to the voice of strangers.

A scripture that describes a lot of zealous mis-guided prophets,today, is Rom.10:2-3,"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God,but not according to knowledge.For they being ignorant of God's righteousness,and going about to establish their own righteousness,have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

But we are warned not to be easily carried away with every new doctrine. Eph.4:13-15,"Till we come in the unity of the faith,and of the knowledge of the Son of God,unto a perfect man,unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:that we henceforth be no more children,tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,by the slight of men,and cunning craftiness,whereby they lie in wait to deceive;but speaking the truth in love,may grow up into him in all things,which is the head,even Christ." Yes, we must search the scriptures daily,to find whether the things we hear are so.Only the truth as it is in Christ Jesus will save our souls.

Col.2:6-10,"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,so walk ye in him:rooted and built up in him,and established in the faith,asxxx ye have been taught,and abounding therein with thanksgiving.Be ware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world,and not after Christ.For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.And ye are complete in him,which is the head of all principality and power."

Just a word here about another reason for the present day famine of the knowledge of the word of God in the flock.Also a fault of the shepherds; who are the preachers and teachers in the church.It is some of the so-called learned discourses you hear being preached to the people today;in hopes of appealing to the educated class.Delivering these sermons to untaught people, is about like handing a toothless man tough meat and corn on the cob as a diet,and wondering why he is undernourished.Actually these sermons full of the words of man's wisdom;using the words man's wisdom teaches are about as nourishing as chaff of the wheat,or corn husks,anyway.Paul condemns this type of preaching in 1 Cor.14:9,"So likewise ye,except ye utter with the tongue words easy to be understood,how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." Just speaking into the air,words the people cannot understand,may show how well educated you are in the wisdom of this world.But it dosen't do anything for the listeners,in the way of edification.

But if we quote bible words,and use bible terms in our preaching,we are availing ourselves of the wisdom of God which is higher than man's wisdom, even as the heavens are higher than the earth.Then our teaching will be so plain that a "wayfaring man,though a fool need not err therein." Isa.35:8. Paul said in 1 Cor.1:17,20 & 24,"For Christ sent me not to baptize,but to baptize,but to preach the gospel:not with the wisdom of words,lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.---Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?----But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God,and the wisdom of God." So in the service of God it is the words we learn of Christ that are ~~xx~~ wisdom.Because the wisdom of this world is foolish in the sight of God.

In fact it isn't the educated and wise in this world that listen to,and obey the gospel,as a rule.And if one of them is humble enough to obey the gospel,he will do it on hearing the plain simple gospel truth undecorated by the wisdom of men.As Paul reminds us in 1 Cor.1:26,"For ye see your calling brethren,how not many wise men after the flesh,not many mighty,not many noble are called." The same truth holds with us today.

Remember that it is by the wisdom of the world that people do not know God in the first place.1 Cor.1:21,"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Not by foolish preaching;but by the foolishness of preaching.But as soon as men start leaning to worldly wisdom in their preaching,they leave the word of God (which is wisdom) and his preaching becomes foolish in the sight of God.

In Rom.1:21-22,Paul tells us of the results of trying to be wise in this world's wisdom rather than in the word of God. "Because that when they knew God,they glorified him not as God,neither were thankful;but became vain in their imaginations,and their foolish heart was darkened.Professing themselves to be wise,they became fools."

Jas.3:17,tells us,"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,easy to be entreated,full of mercy,and good fruits,without partiality,and without hypocricy." Notice that the wisdom from above is first of all pure and unmixed with the wisdom of men;then it is peaceable and so on.But we are never to sacrifice the purity of the word of God for the sake of peace,popularity,or a big crowd.

1 Cor.2:12-13,"Now we have received,not the spirit of the world,but the spirit which is of God;that we mifgt know the things that are freely given to us of God.Which things also we speak,not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth,but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;comparing spiritual things with spiritual." So brethren,we are to compare spiritual things with spiritual. Let us call bible things by bible names.Let us have book,chapter,and verse for everything we teach and do.Then we will abide in the wisdom of God which comes from above;and is first of all pure and unmixed with the wisdom of men of this world.Then the flock will be fed with the pure word of God.Then they will grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth,and thrive as God meant for us to do.And we will be of one mind in Christ.

This is not the popular way.But the way of truth was not popular even when Christ walked this earth.At one time when Christ had preached a sermon, we have the statement:"From that time many of his disciples went back,and walked with him no more" Jno.6:66.The same thing happens to us today.If you preach against falsehood,very often certain brethren will walk no more with you.But it has ever been so.Luke 6:26,tells us,"Woe unto you,when all men speak well of you.For so did their fathers to the false prophets."

They crucified the great shepherd of the sheep,because he contended with the false teachers of the religious world of his time.They are no kinder today;but let us so live that:"When the chief shepherd shall appear,we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Pet.5:4.

Yours for the truth,the whole truth,and nothing but the truth,

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