

"ESTABLISH YOUR HEART" BY "FOLLOWING THE GOOD SHEPHERD" "
FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD IS NEAR" JAMES 5:8

- Say - Welcome to Sabbath School class. Let's bow our head as we ask God for understanding in our study today. This is the 6th lesson in a 7-part series from James 5:8 which says, "Be ye also patient; establish your hearts (place firmly your face toward God and His way of life, not our way or the world's way of life)".
- Say - In lesson 1 we discussed the importance of knowing God's goal or reward for us and our purpose here on earth in "establishing the heart" of a future King. We discussed the patience one must have as God's people live each day with the expectation that His coming is very near.
- Say - We have discussed the importance of "establishing our hearts" by learning to love and obey God's laws, giving God the "reins" of our mind and staying on the Path of Life or "Strait and Narrow way" shown to us in God's Holy Days and we have discussed how we are to "establish our hearts by coming out of Babylon" as we prepare for Christ's coming.
- Say - God reveals to us another way to "establish our hearts" as we prepare for His coming. God gave his people instructions so we could distinguish the Good Shepherd from a false shepherd. The Bible uses the analogy of the shepherd and sheep which are symbolic of Christ, our spiritual Shepherd, and we, His people, as His sheep. He calls His followers the "little flock" for not many choose to follow Him, Luke 12:32.
- Say - The Bible speaks about many followers of God who were shepherds such as Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Rachel, Moses, and the prophet, Amos, as well as many others. Jacob's sons, making up the twelve tribes of the Nation of Israel, had many shepherds among them. At the young age of 10, from the tribe of Judah, came a young boy named David, an ancestor of Jesus, who was a very good shepherd.
- Say - David spent many years filled with days and nights out in the verdant pastureland caring for his sheep. David spoke of the Good Shepherd who watched over him. He said,
- "The LORD (the one true God) is my shepherd (my teacher, ruler, friend); I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures (for rest): he leadeth me (with care) beside the still (quiet refreshing) waters. He restoreth (repairs) my soul: he leadeth me in

the paths of righteousness (justly, the way of life pleasing to God) for his name's sake (for His people's welfare). Yea, though I walk through the valley (dense forests, steep valleys or narrow gorges) of the shadow of death (of extreme danger), I will fear no evil (God is not limited by anything): for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me (console, symbolic of power and authority). Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over (blessings abundantly and we may feast with God our Shepherd in spite of the turmoil or enemies around us). Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever (eternal life)" Ps. 23.

Say - The good news is the same shepherd David spoke of in the verses above is Jesus Christ who is the Good Shepherd who cares, guides, and instructs all who, called of God, have chosen to follow and obey Him!

Say - What was our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ like when He walked the earth nearly 2000 years ago? The Bible tells us, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues (gathering places), and preaching the gospel (good tidings) of the (coming) kingdom (of God), and healing every sickness and every disease among the people".

Say - The Bible continues, "When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them (had love and pity for them), because they fainted (had grown weary and were in a hopeless condition), and were scattered abroad (abandoned and neglected), as sheep having no shepherd (someone to care for them to feed them physically and spiritually) and He began to teach them many things", Matt. 9:35, 36.

Say - He taught them the law of His Father; He taught them the TRUTH about how to have eternal life. He taught them about repentance and baptism and how His Holy Days reveal the "Path of Life" for all mankind. He taught them the importance of His special day, His Sabbath Day, and the "royal law" of how to treat our fellowman and how to love our enemies. He taught His people the rules about clean and unclean meats and how to have a healthy vibrant life, Matt. 5:17, Acts 28:23, Luke 24:44, Acts 28:23.

Say - Thankfully our Good Shepherd, Christ, taught us how to determine a good shepherd from a false one as He sat on the Mt. of Olives two days before He died and taught the multitudes. It weighed heavily on His mind. He said, "...take heed that no man deceive you for

many (not few) shall come in My name saying I am Christ and shall deceive many, Matt. 24:5.

Say - Christ, the Good Shepherd, said to His flock, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold (symbolic of the spiritual enclosure of God's true people), but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber (all false religions). But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep". (Christ is the "door", He is the only divine Shepherd, His way is the ONLY way to eternal life. Anyone who teaches another philosophy or man-made religion other than Christ's and believes they are teaching the truth are deceived. Many religions are mixed with truth and error but our Shepherd teaches us to "Prove ALL things" by the Word of God, I Thes. 5:21 then we will be solidly "established" in "The Way" which leads to eternal life and will not be deceived by a false shepherd.)

Say - Christ continued, "To him the porter (Christ) openeth (those called by God to freely come to Him); and the sheep hear his voice (they recognize the true Shepherd): and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out (leads them out of darkness of deception into light (truth, life). 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 (false shepherd) will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers (false doctrines)" John 10. (Not knowing the true Shepherd, many will follow every wind of doctrine and the only way we will know His voice, His teachings, is if we study and ask God for understanding. When called of God and choose to follow Him and our knowledge is based on the teachings and laws of God, we become the "elect", no longer dumb sheep and we will no longer be deceived, Matt. 24:24.)

Say - Continuing on, Christ said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (our goal), and shall go in and out, and find pasture (will find peace, rest, comfort and living water, symbolic of eternal life). In contrast, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (all the false shepherds, but), I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly, (In contrast to the false shepherds, "follow Me only" He is saying)" John 10:10. Why?

Say - "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (Which He already has given His life for His sheep to save them from utter destruction but read on and notice what a false shepherd does.) But he that is an hireling, and not the (good)

shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming (someone with false doctrine), and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them (because many are not diligently seeking the truth of God and are deceived), and scattereth the sheep. (The false shepherd, when bad times come is not going to risk his life for his sheep. He will take off, why is this so? Read on.) The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep (It's that simple).

Say - In contrast, I, (Christ) am the good shepherd, and know my sheep (He loves them, "No greater love than to lay my life down for my sheep", Jn. 17:10), and am known of mine. (How does He know us? If we keep His commandments and keep the covenant/agreement we made with Him when we chose to follow Him or were baptized) And I give unto them eternal life (His spirit); and they shall never perish (no second death), neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" John 10:1-14, 27, 28.

Say - Today, we do not call our leaders of the flock shepherds, we call them preachers, ministers, or servants. There are many churches and denominations filled with philosophies of men and God looks down and sees a "scattered flock, His people, His bride". What does God think?

Say - God not only calls them false shepherds but says, "You hypocrites, (the apostate/false church and its leaders) well did Esaias (Isaiah) prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh (near) unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain (useless, He doesn't hear them) they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Doctrines mixed with truth and error creates confusion which is why God tells us, "Come out of her (Babylon)" where the false shepherds and religion of confusion are taught and the way to eternal life is not known).

Say - In our world today, not only are there many denominations and many Gods proclaimed to millions around the world but there are also many different doctrines all teaching different ways to obtain eternal life. But what does the Good Shepherd tell His sheep, His followers? He said, there is, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all", Ephesians 4:5, 6.

Say - When we are under a righteous shepherd/leader, not a false one, it will be a pleasant experience. The Bible says it this way, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a

morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth ...", 2 Sam. 23:4.

Say - The Bible tells us that to become a follower of God, or to become one of His "Chosen people", we must first be "called of God". The Bible says it this way, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw (win over by spiritual influence) him: and I will raise him up (resurrect) at the last day", John 6:44. This is step number 1.

Say - Then one must make the decision and "count the cost of following God. Here is how Christ says it, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross (a preparedness even unto death), and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it (implying it is better not to begin than to begin and not finish, I Jn. 5:42)" Luke 14:27, 28. This is step number 2.

Say - When the decision is reached, Christ gave us the steps to be a follower of Him. He said, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent (of sin): for the kingdom of heaven is at hand", Matt. 4:17. Christ through Peter added for us, "...repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (spirit)", Acts 2:38. All taught through the Spring Holy Days which the world's religions unfortunately ignore.

Say - The receiving of God's spirit given to us as His "firstfruits" pictured by the Spring Holy Day of Pentecost, is what gives us wisdom to follow God. The power of His spirit begins to heal our spiritual blindness as He gives us eyes to see and ears to hear so we can understand the Truth of God for the very first time and this is what makes us "wise unto salvation", 2 Tim. 3:15, Jn. 16:13.

Say - God tells us, "My son, if thou (you) wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee (you, store and establish them in your mind); So that (you) incline thine ear (or listen sincerely) unto wisdom, and apply thine (your) heart to understanding (the right perception of truth); Yes, if thou (you) criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding (earnestly seeking the truth of God); If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasures (remember precious gems are found deep within the earth, study, be diligent, dig deep into His words of life); Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find (obtain) the knowledge of God".

Say - Continuing, "He layeth (is always ready to give) up sound wisdom for the righteous (those who love Him): he is a buckler (assistant) to them that walk uprightly. He... preserveth (defends) the way of his saints. Then shalt (you) understand righteousness (My instructions and laws), and judgment, and equity; yes, every good path (EVERY part of God's plan of Salvation taught to us through His Holy Days which reveal the "Path of Life"). (Do you understand God's plan of Salvation taught to us through His Holy Days, then you have been "called of God" you are "one of the few").

Say - Christ continued, "When wisdom entereth into thine (your) heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; (His) discretion (purpose, and His purpose is to make us in His image, Gen. 1:26.) shall preserve thee, understanding (knowledge) shall keep thee (you). Why? (It is what will) ... "deliver thee (us) from the way of the evil man (the false shepherds), ... Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness (against the truth of God); Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and froward in their paths (because they lead to death not life)", Proverbs 2:1-15.

Say - In another place Christ tells us, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom (the wisdom of God); I have led thee in right paths (the "Paths of Life"). When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened (distressed); and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble (weak in the truth of God). "Hold fast" (be strong and courageous, without doubt) of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy (eternal) life", Proverbs 4:10-13. This is our promise from the Good Shepherd!

Say - Today our world is filled with lost sheep led astray by false shepherds, false prophets, and God will deal with them, Zec. 10:2Ez, 34:9, 10. Soon Christ will return for His lost sheep and He will care for their needs. The Bible explains it this way, "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 the inhabited places of the country (when He establishes the Kingdom of God pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles".

Say - "I will feed them (the truth of God) in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their (sheep) fold be: there shall they lie in a good (sheep) fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was (spiritually) lost (unlike the false shepherds), and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken (hearted, lonely and poor), and will strengthen that which was sick (spiritually sick): but I will destroy the fat and the strong (the false shepherds who used the people to become wealthy); I will feed them with judgment!

Say - "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, my servant David; he shall feed them (the ways of God), and he shall be their shepherd (King) (2 Sam. 7:12). And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant/agreement of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods (will dwell safely among all people and animals everywhere)".

Say - "And I will make them and the places round about my hill (Jerusalem) a blessing (to all); and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing (heaven on earth, not up in heaven as the false shepherds teach). And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD (the promise of the covenant will be fulfilled, Lev. 26:4-13), when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them (the false shepherds). And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them..."
Ezekiel 34:12-16, 22-31.

Say - "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat (nothing painful or burning). For the Lamb (Jesus Christ) which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters (eternal life): and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" Rev. 17:16-17.

Say - "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him (God will be the authority in all things): He

shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Isaiah 40:10-11.

Say - And finally, not only will Christ gather His flock unto Him but He will expose the false shepherds and reveal their fate. The Bible says His people are "Scattered because there is no shepherd and they became meat for all the beasts (false leaders bearing false doctrine) of the field when 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", Ez. 34:5, 6.

Say - But for the false shepherd Christ tells us, "...woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves (and not the good of the people)! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill strengthened (the rich to get their possessions and property), neither have ye healed that which was sick (spiritually sick and blind), neither have ye bound up that which was broken (hearted, lonely, needy), neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them (in contrast to the Good Shepherd)", Ez. 34:2-4.

Say - Further punishment for false shepherds, "Woe to the idol (worthless) shepherd (pastor) that leaveth (falsified with man-made doctrine) the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye (had failed to protect and watch at all times for the good of the sheep): his arm shall be clean dried up (no longer in authority over God's flock), and his right eye shall be utterly darkened" (totally useless), Zec. 11:17.

Say - The Bible says, " For the idols have spoken vanity (false gods consulted from divination and sorcery), and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams (pretended to see the future and lied); they comfort in vain (their promises never happen): therefore they went their way as a flock (went astray), they were troubled, because there was no shepherd (which taught the truth of God)", Zec. 10:2.

Say - How thankful we can be for the soon returning Good Shepherd for His sheep and be comforted in His promise, "The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail", Isaiah 58:11 NIV. It

is a promise we must "hold fast" and comfort one another as we continue to "establish our hearts" with patience as we pray, "Thy Kingdom come"!

MEMORY VERSE

...I will seek out my sheep and gather them
...and feed them...and I will set up one shepherd
over them...my servant, David...and I will be their God...and I will gently
lead those that are young...
Ezekiel 34, Isaiah 40:11

MEMORY VERSE FOR TOTS

I will seek out my sheep
and
I will be their God...
and
I will gently lead the young...
Ezekiel 34, Isaiah 40:11

BELOW IS THE SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON FOR TOTS

BIBLE STORY
THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Bible speaks of many followers of God who were shepherds such as Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Rachel, Moses and David. But there is one shepherd who is greater than all. His name is Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who cares, guides, and feeds all, who will follow Him and His way of life.

What was the Good Shepherd like when He walked the earth nearly 2000 years ago? The Bible tells us when Christ saw the multitudes He was moved with great love for them because He found them to be a scattered flock, in a hopeless condition because they had no one to care for them and guide them. Jesus knew the false shepherds would prey upon them and easily lead them astray to false doctrine and false Gods.

So Christ began to feed them good things to eat the bible tells us. He fed them fish and bread and wine and most importantly He fed them spiritual food. Christ taught them about the coming Kingdom of God and how they could be a part of His plan of salvation.

Christ taught them as He does us today, the Law of his Father including the law of clean and unclean meats, God's Holy Days and repentance and baptism. He taught them as He tells us, "see that you be not deceived".

He taught them and us how to know the difference between a good shepherd and a false shepherd. He said the Good Shepherd will give His life for the sheep, all others will not.

Today there are many denominations proclaiming different ways to eternal life. But the Good Shepherd tells us there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God who is above all". This God is the Good Shepherd. Do you know any other Shepherd other than Jesus Christ who would give His life for you? He is the only Good Shepherd we are to follow.

BELOW ARE THE MEMORY VERSES TO BE CUT OUT AND PLACED WITH AN APPROPRIATE PICTURE WHICH COMPLEMENTS THE STORY OR LESSON AND PLACED IN THE SABBATH SCHOOL NOTEBOOKS.

MEMORY VERSE

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