

The Death Of The Shepherd
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"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:11,14-18)

Jesus Christ declared Himself to be "**THE Good Shepherd**" on two distinct occasions, according to the passage of Scripture cited above. THE Shepherd is the definite article, and not simply "a shepherd," or, "one shepherd," but THE Shepherd who is to die for the sheep. He states here in the most positive and certain terms that this is the case so as to leave absolutely no possibility of misunderstanding of the part of His sheep who hear Him, or those who will later read of His pronouncement.

And not only does He clearly state the case here, He also spoke in perfect accord and harmony with many other Scriptures which prophesy of this event, or record that such prophesy actually was fulfilled. I ask all to read, in their context, these texts as well. **Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11-13, 22-25; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25, 5:4.**

Having established the fact that Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, we next turn our attention to the matter of His death. He spoke of His death as being for, or in behalf of His sheep. Thus, the answer to all questions as to why the Shepherd is to die becomes clear and unambiguous. It is for His sheep that He is to die, and did, in due time actually die.

But yet , some question might remain as to why He must die. What requires His death? Simply to answer, "**for the sheep**," would not be sufficient reason for His death if there were no more to it than that. It cannot be "just because." There must be more than "just because" to necessitate the death of the Good Shepherd. And there is more than "just because." The reason is, the sheep for whom the Shepherd stands Surety, even to die for, are guilty as charged with sins that demand their death. They are rebels against God and have violated His holy, righteous, and divine law. They are guilty, without question, have been tried, convicted, and stand in jeopardy of specific, exact, and right judgment awaiting the execution of that sentence. They have been deemed worthy of death for they have sinned. They have sinned against God.

Thus, we see that the guilt of the sheep necessitated either their death (eternal separation from God) or the death of their Surety in their room and stead. Therefore, we must conclude that according to the Eternal Covenant which God entered into with Himself, the death of the Surety was mandatory. Mandatory! MANDATORY! Again, I declare, in order for the guilty sheep to live, the Surety had to die.

Was there no other way? There was no other way. The covenant required that Jesus Christ, the Son of God die for the sins penalty and guilt that was borne by the Substitute Lamb Who stood as One slain from the foundation of the world. Each and every sin that each and every one of His sheep committed was immediately and completely laid up to the account of the Surety, and not to the account of the vile, wretched, miserable sinner who committed such acts of rebellion and disobedience against the Name, honor, and Being of our Holy God. He bore their guilt. **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** (II Corinthians 5:21)

There is also another reality concerning the death of the Good Shepherd, and that is, His death must be voluntary. How can this be? How is it possible that His death be mandatory, as we have clearly shown it to be, and at the same time be voluntary? Is this an unanswerable question? No! It is a paradox, or as a paradox is defined, "a statement or proposition seemingly self contradictory or absurd, and yet explicable as expressing a truth."

The death of the Shepherd is scripturally proven to be both mandatory AND voluntary, which, though it seems to be a clear contradiction, is in reality the expression of perhaps the most sublime truth of all that one can possibly imagine. Mandatory, because, **"... sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."** (James 1:15) And at the same time voluntary on the part of the Shepherd, for **"... the good shepherd GIVETH his live for the sheep."** and, **"... no man TAKETH it (life) from me but I lay it down OF MYSELF."** (John 10:11; John 11:18)

Never has there occurred such a death as the death of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd of the sheep. All other deaths that have ever come to pass, or those that shall yet come to pass in no wise compares with His death. And that is not to say that He did not actually die, for surely He died. In His case He died just as surely as others have died, but He did not die as the result of death claiming Him as death actually claims all mortal beings who are defeated and taken against their will by that enemy, death.

In His case when His work was successfully completed, He actually and literally laid down His own life! That is, He, according to the Scriptures, dismissed His Spirit from His body, leaving that body dead. He did this voluntarily, having agreed to the mandatory requirement that He had bound Himself to accomplish in the stipulations of the Eternal Covenant. He finished His work and met the judgment of God against the sins of His sheep - and THEN He died.

Please take note of this passage of Scripture: "**... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.**" (Hebrews 9:26, 27, 28)

The Good Shepherd came expressly to put away the sins of His sheep, and He did this by the sacrifice of Himself. His death was, therefore a willing death on His part, yet required to satisfy the demands of God against sin. He had to die, yet He died willingly.

Take note also that men whose sins are not covered by the Blood of the Surety must meet judgment after they die. And so the Scriptures confirm that at the Great White Throne judgment, all sinners will be called back from mortal death to meet their judgment and final and eternal death in the lake of fire.

But, praise the Lord, Jesus Christ met the judgment of God against the sins of His sheep while He yet lived, though He were on the sacrificial altar, (the crucifixion tree), and when that judgment was satisfied THEN He died, voluntarily, never to be exposed to death again. The Surety has died, therefore the sheep for whom He died are freed, with no judgment yet awaiting them. Salvation is of the Lord!