



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## The Sheep Theme in the Bible

Since we have named this new publication *Feed My Sheep* (FMS), we thought it appropriate to commence these Bible studies on the sheep motif in the Scriptures. The shepherd and his flock of sheep is one of the most prominent and important symbols in the Bible. Sheep are mentioned more often than any other animal. This is not surprising since sheep were a central and vital part of Israel's economy ever since the time of the patriarchs...and even further; remember, Abel was a shepherd. In the gospel of John, chapter 10, v. 11, Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd..." A famous painting depicts Jesus as the good shepherd. Even in only nominally Christian homes, we see prints of this famous painting of Jesus with his shepherd's staff and leading his flock of sheep...or that other famous painting of Jesus with the one lost sheep draped around his neck, carrying it back to the fold.

Such a common theme in Christianity! Such a common scene in so many Christian homes today! Moreover, who could count how many thousands of sermons have been preached around this theme? Yet if one were to ask the average Christian what the sheep symbolize, the answers are typically: "The sheep stand for sinners" or "for Christians" or "the church" or "God's people" (implying the same as the next answer) or "all God's children—red and yellow, black and white..."

One of the keys to understanding any literary work, whether a novel or a history book, is to be able to *properly identify the players*. That most Christians fail to properly identify who the sheep are is evidence that ministers have failed miserably in laying even this most foundational of Bible truths. This monograph will establish this simple and fundamental truth. (Even most so-called "fundamentalists" are ignorant of this fact.)

While the Bible is both literature and history, it is of course much more than that. It is wholly the inspired Word

of Almighty God. It is his Manufacturer's Manual for the earth and its inhabitants. But we see that Plan (the Bible as the Manufacturer's Manual) not yet fully realized on the earth. (Cf. Hebrews 2:8) It is still a work-in-progress. To accomplish his goal of having the earth and *all* its inhabitants eventually operate perfectly in accord with his Word, Yahweh-God instituted a long-range plan, a plan which even incorporates evil, sin, disease, decay and the death of all living things.

Then, to demonstrate his great love for his creation, he promised he would send a redeemer to release them from the bondage of corruption and death. (Romans 8:20, 21) Furthermore, to demonstrate to the rest of the world how to follow the Manufacturer's Manual, God *chose* the descendants of one lineage of people. They are known as the Israelites (not to be confused with the term "Jews," which distinction will be shown in a later writing). These Chosen People, the Israelites, were to be God's witnesses, to demonstrate how to do it. True to Plan, however, God decided to first have his Chosen People, the Israelites, demonstrate to the rest of the world how *not* to do it.

### Identifying the sheep

Jesus Christ is without question the central figure of the Bible. Second to him among the primary players are these people known as the Israelites. It is these people whom the Bible identifies as "sheep." Indeed, it is only Israelites who are ever identified as sheep. No Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Canaanites, Moabites, Eskimos, Orientals, Incas or Arabs or Negro people, or any other people are ever referred to in the Bible as sheep. The first occasion where Israel is metaphorically called sheep is in the Book of Numbers.

**Numbers 27:15 And Moses spake unto the LORD**  
[properly, YHWH <sup>1</sup>], **saying,**

**16 Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,**

**17 Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of YHWH be not as sheep which have no shepherd.**

It should be noted that the “congregation of YHWH” is not the equivalent of the New Testament “church.” The “congregation of YHWH” included the entire body of Israelite people, whereas the New Testament church includes only true believers in Jesus Christ. The next passage to use sheep symbolically is set during the reigns of King Ahab of the Northern House/Kingdom of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of the Southern House/Kingdom of Judah. There we see Micaiah—a solitary, true prophet of God who stands against 400 false (i.e., politically-correct) prophets—and he is given this word from YHWH to tell these kings:

**1 Kgs. 22:17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and YHWH said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.**

In addition to identifying “all Israel...as sheep,” notice also the idea in both Numbers 27:17 and here in 1 Kings that the sheep are without a shepherd. Shepherds in the biblical metaphor stand for either civil or religious leaders or both. Surprisingly, there is at least one case where a shepherd is a non-Israelite king! (Cyrus; see Isa. 44:10). The first and surface application of this metaphor here in 1 Kgs. 22 is that the body politic (i.e., the entire congregation or population) of Israel is without a leader who has the peoples’ best interests in mind. There is, of course, a further and spiritual application to this metaphor to which we will return presently.

When David was confronted with a choice of punishment for his sin of taking an illegal census, he, too, referred to the Israel people as sheep.

**1 Chr. 21:17 And David said unto God, *Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O YHWH my God, be on me, and on my father’s house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.***

The psalms are replete with references to Israel (but to no other nation) as sheep.

**Psa. 44:11 Thou hast given us [Israel] like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.**

**Psa. 95:7 For he is our God; and we [Israel] are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand...**

**Psa. 100:3 Know ye that YHWH he is God: *it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we [Israel] are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.***

The term “flocks and herds” is a common biblical epithet for sheep and cattle respectively; but when used alone, “flocks” usually is assumed to refer to sheep. (Rarely, it refers to goats.) Hence, we find:

**Psa. 77:20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

**Psa. 78: 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:**

**52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.**

**Isa. 40:11 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.**

### Lost sheep

Some of the previously cited verses have also made mention of the sheep being scattered. This ties in with the “lost sheep” motif. It is prominently developed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and usually appears in conjunction with the condemnation of false or bad shepherds—whether civil or religious leaders.

**Jer. 50:6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.**

God holds both types of shepherds, the political leaders and the religious ministers, responsible for the sheep getting “lost.” (Nonetheless, the people themselves are not guiltless either.) The religious teachers and authorities had failed to teach and obey God’s laws, while the governmental leaders failed to enforce them so they could follow their own desires for power and wealth. As a result, the nation meandered in a downward moral spiral over several generations until God brought judgment upon the nation. It manifested in military invasion and the deportation of the people to foreign lands.

**Jer. 50:17 Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven *him* away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.**

This verse refers specifically to the Assyrian invasions of the late 700’s B.C. upon the northern Kingdom of Israel, followed by the Babylonian invasion of the southern Kingdom of Judah in about 586 B.C. During these invasions and deportations the vast bulk of the population of the Israelites and Judahites (nicknamed “Jews”<sup>2</sup>) were

“scattered” and “lost” among the “heathen” (non-Israelite) peoples. [We have discussed these events in detail in our recent audiotape message *A Thumbnail Sketch of Our Israelite Identity*. Ask for tape numbers 321 & 322; or an earlier and similar message, *Your Bible Ancestors: An Introduction to the Identity of the Caucasian People*, tape numbers 221 & 222. \$4 suggested offering per tape.] Many ministers and theology “experts” claim that these “lost” Israelites were amalgamated among those heathen peoples and are lost to history, and that God will never deal with them again as his people. However, this is contrary to what God himself declares as his plan in several Old Testament scriptures.

### God condemns the pastors

In fact, while condemning the leaders who grow wealthy, famous and powerful at the expense of the flock, Yahweh-God plainly states that he himself will seek and gather his lost sheep.

**Eze. 34: 10 Thus saith the Lord YWHH; 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.**

When this happens, false shepherds will be unemployed and they will be held accountable for all their deeds.

**11 For thus saith the Lord YHWH; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. . . .**

**16 I will seek that which was lost,...**

And sure enough, God himself did just that. He fulfilled this prophecy when he, YHWH-God, came in the form of Jesus Christ. (Hence, this is another proof of the deity of Christ). For we find that Jesus himself declares his mission in Matthew 18. And to make sure that his hearers (and later, we as readers of his word) would know that he had his Chosen People, Israel, in mind; Jesus immediately connects “that which was lost” to the sheep symbolism again.

**Mat 18: 11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.**

**12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?**

**13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.**

In Ezekiel 34, the prophet was writing about the millions of Israelites who had been captured and deported,

dispersed and scattered among non-Israelites. But amalgamation was not to be the final result, but rather regathering.

**34:12 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.**

**13 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.**

All of this finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and Christianity. The “gathering” is both a spiritual gathering under the banner of Christianity and a literal gathering to a geographical land area. In v. 13, the phrase “their own land” should not be construed to mean that these Israelites would be regathered into that tiny, New Jersey-sized sandbox in old Palestine, modern prophecy preachers notwithstanding. Rather, God had assured David that there was a second and obviously greater Promised Land for Israel sometime in the distant future (2 Samuel 7:10). [Again, see the audiotapes mentioned above.]

### Sheep in the New Testament

To mix a metaphor, God did not “change horses” with his sheep when we come to the New Testament. In other words, the Bible is consistent. The sheep in the New Testament are still the same people they symbolized in the Old Testament; namely, the Israelites. When Jesus first sent out his apostles to “get their feet wet” in healing and casting out demons, he very specifically instructed them concerning whom to minister to and whom they were to avoid.

**Mat. 10: 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles [in this case, non-Israelites], and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:**

**6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

Our most recent two-tape audio message, *The Samaritans*, goes into great detail concerning this very **exclusionist policy** laid down by the Savior. (Ask for tape numbers 333 & 334; \$8 offering, if possible.) To drive the point home, Jesus clearly stated to whom he was sent in Matthew, chapter 15:

**Mat. 15: 24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

### Gospel of John

The climax of the sheep theme and where it is ex-

pounded upon most is in the discourse of the Savior himself. Due to space limitations, we will only skim the surface in this monograph. More in a later issue.

**John 10:1 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.**

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

Sheep have this very peculiar ability to recognize the voice of their shepherd. Two shepherds can allow their flocks to mingle at the brook or watering trough, but each sheep will follow only the voice of his respective shepherd when the time comes to depart.

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

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

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

Keep in mind that every time Jesus speaks of his flock or of his sheep he is referring to his Chosen People Israel. Since the Lord said that his sheep would “hear his voice and follow him” (v. 27), is it not clear then that this means that the Israel people would be Christians? And there is nothing in Scripture which says that his people Israel would wait 2,000 or more years before becoming Christians. In general, they responded and became Christians when they heard the gospel (his voice) preached, beginning on the day of Pentecost. This centuries-long process has been the fulfillment of many prophecies, not the least of which is the following one given by the Lord Jesus Christ:

**16 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.**

Although many ministers and theologians are quick to say that the “other sheep” are the “Gentiles” (by which they mean non-Israelites), this is clearly a misapplication of the Bible type. The sheep symbolize the Israel people and no other! Then who are the “other sheep?” The small community of Judahites and Benjaminites in Judea and Galilee were one fold of sheep. The other fold was none other than the millions of Israelites of both the northern and southern kingdoms who had been deported and scattered into captivity six and seven hundred years before Christ.

By the time the apostles were sent out, these dispersed Israelites were all over the (known) world: from the Indus river at the border of India to the steppes of southern Russia to Asia Minor to Greece to the British Isles and Scandinavia and all points in between. They were indeed

scattered among the heathen, just as had been prophesied, and now they were about to begin to be regathered under the banner of Christendom, as had also been prophesied elsewhere. [Cf. Jer. 23:3; Ezek. 37:11-22] The general direction of the migration of these Israelite people was in a northwesterly direction. Thus, over the next several centuries after Christ the white people of Europe became Christian (not perfect, but at least nominally) to such an overwhelming extent that Europe was for many centuries known simply as “Christendom.”

Later, Peter is writing to believers “... scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (i.e., in Asia Minor). In v. 2, he addresses them as “elect,” which is another word for “chosen.” In chapter 2, v. 25, he unequivocally identifies them as Israelites who have by faith in Christ now been gathered into the one fold of Jesus Christ.

**1 Pet. 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.**

Finally in the gospel of John, we find the Lord instructing Peter on behalf of all the apostles and for later ministers of the gospel:

**John 21: 17 ... Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? ... Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.**

#### ENDNOTES

1. In most English Bibles, when one sees the word “Lord” in either all caps [LORD] or in upper and lower caps [Lord], it indicates that the Bible translators have removed the sacred name of our God, which is YHWH (as transliterated from the Hebrew letters, and pronounced Yahweh {Yah-way}). It will be our general practice to re-insert the sacred name where it belongs, either as the tetragrammaton (YHWH) or as the pronounced name (Yahweh).

2. But not all those called “Jews” in the Bible are true genetic descendants of Jacob-Israel and his son, Judah. Some are impostors.

*Feed My Sheep* is a part of the teaching ministry of James Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Contributions may be sent to Stone Kingdom Ministries, P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.