

Sermon Subject: CHRIST'S OTHER SHEEP

SCRIPTURE: Book of Mormon, 3rd Nephi, 7:20-26

Verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said, Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching; and they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the Gentiles should not at any time hear my voice; that I should not manifest myself unto them, save it were by the Holy Ghost. But behold, ye have both heard my voice, and seen me; and ye are my sheep, and are numbered among those whom the Father hath given me. And verily, verily I say unto you, that I have other sheep, which are not of this land; neither of the land of Jerusalem; neither in any parts of that land round about, whither I have been to minister. For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them. But I have received a commandment of the Father, that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold, and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them.

Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

Last week we reviewed for you some of the Bible prophecies which we believe point definitely and positively to the Book of Mormon. Today we want to examine at some length another Bible prophecy -- one in the words of Jesus himself -- which we believe points definitely and unequivocally in the same direction. It is the statement we have just read about Jesus' "other sheep." We believe that those "other sheep" -- or at least some of them -- were descendants of Joseph of Egypt, who had migrated from Jerusalem to ancient America in 600 B.C.

Bible commentators who know nothing of the Book of Mormon are all unanimous in declaring that the "other sheep" of which Jesus was speaking in John 10:16 were the Gentiles. We admit that there is no doubt whatsoever that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. But the principle is plainly laid down throughout the scriptures that the Gentiles were to receive the gospel through the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and of Israel, the servant nation, and not through the personal ministry of Christ. Though Jesus may have met and incidentally talked to Gentiles in his ministry, he never entered upon any formal ministry to any group or race or nation of Gentiles. He himself declared, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The question which we wish to discuss here is therefore this: Were the Gentiles the "other sheep" about whom Jesus was talking in this verse, or were the "other sheep" another nation of Israel, lost or unknown to the people of Jerusalem?

Many centuries ago, God made covenant with Israel, and Israel with him. By obedience and faithfulness to this covenant, Israel was to become the nation or people through whom the Messiah should come, through whom salvation should be proclaimed to the other nations of earth, and through whom the benefits and blessings of a righteous theocratic government were to be demonstrated to the world. Isaiah 11:10 says: "And in the day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." The 49th chapter of Isaiah contains such verses as these: "Thou art

my servant, O Israel, in whom I shall be glorified." "I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritage. Isaiah 42:6 says, "I the Lord will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles." Isaiah 60:3 reads: "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

It should be noted in passing that there is no principle more unequivocally emphasized through all the Old Testament prophets, than the principle that though Israel broke its covenant with God, and was scattered to the four corners of the earth, God would not forget that covenant, and when Israel once again turned to him and accepted the Messiah which came through their line, Israel would again be gathered. God has never made covenant with any other nation as he did with Israel. He wills that all men shall be saved -- that the Gentiles should be included in his kingdom -- but there is no deviation from the principle laid down also by Jesus when talking to the Samaritan woman at the well, that "salvation is of the Jews." Through Israel, the chosen servant nation, all the other nations of the earth should be blessed.

Throughout the Old Testament, whenever reference is made to God's sheep, or his flock, that reference is always to Israel, the covenant people. Israel is his flock; the people of Israel are his sheep. David, in the 80th Psalm, addresses himself to the "Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." Isaiah 40:11 is the familiar passage referring to Christ: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The 23rd chapter of Jeremiah is a diatribe against the false shepherds who have destroyed and scattered his flock, and a promise that "I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." (vs 3)

The 34th chapter of Ezekiel is almost in its entirety a reproof of the false shepherd of Israel, and a promise that the scattered sheep of Israel shall be gathered again. From this chapter we select such verses as these: "They were scattered because there is no shepherd...." (vs 5) "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." (vs 6) Incidentally this is another indication that some of the sheep may have found their way to America. "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so I will seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (vs 12) "Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey...." (vs 22) "And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." (vs 23) In verses 17 and 31 Israel is addressed as "my flock, the flock of my pasture."

In the Book of Mormon passage we have used as a scripture reading, Jesus makes the categorical statement that the Gentiles shall at no time hear his voice, but shall be converted only through the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the preaching of Israel. This is in direct contradiction to the common belief that Jesus was speaking of the Gentiles when he said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice...."

Did Jesus ever go to the Gentiles? There is no historical or scriptural account of any mission Jesus ever undertook in person into Gentile Territory, or to any substantial group of Gentiles, or to any Gentile nation. There are several incidents which seem to indicate that Jesus may have ministered incidentally to individual Gentiles. One such possibility is the healing of the centurion's son, or servant, in Matthew 8:5-13. The Greek version of Matthew's account uses a word which may be translated either boy, son, or servant. Luke's account, in Luke 7:2-10,

uses a different word which can mean either servant or slave. The centurion himself was a Gentile, and therefore cautious about inviting Jesus into his house, but if the sick person was not his son, but his "boy" in the sense of being a servant or slave, then he may have been a Jew. The story of the healing of the nobleman's son in John 4:46-54 may be a variation of this account. If it is, here is a strong possibility that the nobleman or courtier and his son were Gentiles, but still no absolute certainty.

Those who believe that Jesus went to the Gentiles point to the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite or the Syrophenician woman, which is recorded in Matthew 15:21-28, and paralleled in Mark 7:24-30. This woman came beseeching Jesus for help for her daughter. She came admittedly from the region of Tyre and Sidon, which was heathen and Gentile territory. When she asked for Jesus' help, the disciples jumped to the conclusion that she was a Gentile, and asked Jesus to send her away. But Jesus replied, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The woman herself did not know her ancestry -- did not know that she was of Israelite blood; she therefore pleaded as a Gentile for Jesus' blessing. But Jesus knew and recognized her as one of the "lost sheep," of the house of Israel, to whom he was sent. Because it was not meet to take the children's (Israel's) bread and give it to dogs (the Jewish epithet for Gentiles). Jesus gave her not only the crumbs from the table as she requested, but the bread which was fitting and appropriate for a daughter of Israel -- the healing of her daughter.

Following this event, which is the only one mentioned in that Gentile territory Jesus turned eastward to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where a multitude quickly gathered around him. He healed many of them, and performed the miracle of feeding the four thousand with loaves and fishes. Commentators also make bold to state that this crowd which enjoyed Jesus' preaching and healing ministry was a crowd of Gentiles. The Scripture does not say so, and neither do the accompanying facts support such an idea. Galilee was the province of Joseph and Mary and Jesus -- and they were Jews, not Gentiles. It was the home of most of the twelve apostles and they were not Gentiles. The synagogue at Nazareth where Jesus stood up to read from Isaiah, and where the Jews afterwards tried to cast him over a precipice, was in Galilee. Capernaum, which was the center of so much of Jesus' early ministry was in Galilee -- and it had so large a Jewish population that the Roman centurion stationed there courted Jewish favor by building them a synagogue. Cana, where Jesus attended the wedding and turned water to wine, was in Galilee. Nain, where he raised the widow's only son, was in Galilee. The sermon on the mount was preached in Galilee. The conclusion is inescapable -- those Galileans who heard Jesus' voice, who received his healing and preaching ministry, and were fed with the loaves and fishes, were of Israel.

Jesus always seems to have followed the principle he laid down in his statement to the Syrophenician woman: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His first commission to the twelve, found in Matthew 10:4,5, is explicit "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and enter ye not into any city of the Samaritans, But rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

In the ministry of the apostles the same practice of taking the gospel first to the Jew (the only positively known Israelites remaining), and then to the Gentile was followed. In every city where Paul preached, he went first to the Synagogue, and only when the Jews rejected him did he turn to the Gentiles. Luke 24:47 says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in Jesus' name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, the capital city of the Jews. Acts 11:19 says "they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews only." But when the Jews rejected the message, the apostles

followed the example of Paul "who declared, Henceforth ⁺ will go unto the Gentiles." (Acts 18:6) And again when Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogue in Antioch, and were rejected by the Jews, they said: "It is necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

According to the Book of Mormon story, which is corroborated by the Bible prophecy detailed for you in last week's sermon, the ancient inhabitants of America were descendants of Joseph of Egypt. They were of the house of Israel -- lost to their brethren in Palestine, but not lost to God or Christ. The Jews of Palestine did not understand Christ's saying that his "other sheep" should also hear his voice; and no one since, save those who were familiar with the Book of Mormon story, has ever grasped the full meaning of that statement. The Book of Mormon gives a beautiful account of how Jesus in person visited the "other sheep" of Israel who had been led to this continent -- how he gave them his law and his teachings, explained his doctrines, established his church and its ordinances, and ordained his priesthood. These people were more receptive than the sheep of Palestine, for in America this ministry of Jesus ushered in the "golden age," the zenith of their civilized development. As long as they remembered his teachings, they prospered. When they began to forget, they too declined, and destroyed themselves in fratricidal war.

Jesus told these ancient Americans that he had still other sheep -- lost sheep of the house of Israel, who were also to hear his voice. Where these sheep may be we do not know, but we do believe in the promises repeatedly given both in the Bible and in the Book of Mormon, that in the last days the gospel shall go from the Gentiles back to Israel; that Israel shall begin to believe in the Messiah; and that all ¹Israel which is scattered and sifted among all nations shall be gathered from the four corners of the earth to the fold of the Shepherd of Israel.