

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
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The Sermon: OTHER SHEEP I HAVE

Scripture: John 10:14-16

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.

I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Who were the "other sheep" which Jesus mentioned in the tenth chapter of John, with the promise that he would also bring them, and that they should hear his voice? The Bible commentators are almost unanimous in declaring that they were the Gentiles. Will that theory fit all the facts? We do not think so. It will be our purpose in this sermon to show that the Gentiles could not have been the "other sheep" referred to in this saying, and to tell who we believe those sheep to be.

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 Messiah should come, and through whom all the other nations of the earth should be blessed. Though Israel frequently broke that covenant, and suffered the consequences of such rebellion, yet God has declared again and again that he will not forget his covenant with Israel, and that when they return to him and accept the Messiah who came in their line, that he will once again remember his promises and his covenants with them.

Throughout the Old Testament, whenever reference is made to God's sheep, or to his flock, that reference is always to Israel, his covenant people. Israel is his flock; and the people of Israel are his sheep. In the 80th Psalm, David addresses God as the "Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock." Isaiah 40:11 says: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." The 23rd chapter of Jeremiah condemns the false shepherds of Israel who have scattered the flock and promises: I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and will bring them a-

gain to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase." Almost all of the 34th chapter of Ezekiel is also concerned with Israel as a flock that has been scattered, but which shall some day be gathered under the great Shepherd of Israel. We believe that when Jesus said "Other sheep I have," he was not referring to the Gentiles, but to those lost sheep of Israel who had been scattered into unknown places of the earth in the Babylonian conquest, and whose whereabouts are still largely unknown today.

Lest there be misunderstanding, let us hasten to interpolate at this point our belief that the saving mission and gospel of Christ were for both Gentile and Jew. Jesus is the Savior of the world. No man can be excluded from his salvation by his race or nation or color. But salvation was to be preached to the Gentiles indirectly through Israel, the servant nation, and not directly by Jesus himself. Though Jesus may have met and incidentally talked to individual Gentiles during his ministry, he never entered upon any formal ministry to any group or nation of Gentiles. He specifically declared, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His first commission to the twelve was "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." Just before the ascension this commission was changed. The apostles were then commanded to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Did Jesus ever go to the Gentiles? Did they ever "hear his voice?" There is no historical or scriptural account of any mission Jesus ever undertook in person to any substantial group of Gentiles, or

to any Gentile nation. There are several incidents which seem to indicate that Jesus ministered to individual Gentiles, but even here the evidence is not clear. One such possibility is the healing of the centurion's son, or servant, or slave, or boy. The original Greek word can mean any or all of these. If the sick man was the centurion's son, he was a Gentile; but if he was his "boy" in the sense of his "servant" or "slave" he may have been a Jew.

Another incident often cited as evidence that Jesus ministered to the Gentiles is the healing of the daughter of the Syrophenician or Canaanite woman, recorded in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30. Admittedly this woman came from Gentile territory. The apostles therefore leaped to the conclusion that she was a Gentile, and tried to send her away; but Jesus restrained them, and healed her daughter. During this incident he makes two puzzling statements: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." (In the Jewish idiom, the children were the children of the kingdom, or the Jews, and the dogs were the Gentiles.) Yet after specifically declaring that he was not sent to the Gentiles, and that he could not give that which was intended for the house of Israel to those outside, Jesus gave this woman what she had asked for -- the healing of her daughter. What does this indicate? That unknown perhaps even to herself, this woman was of the house of Israel, one of the children of the kingdom, one of the lost sheep of mixed ancestry but of Israelitish blood which were common in this region where the tides of conquest had several times swept back and forth across the country to mix the racial strains.

Bible commentators who assert that this ministry to the Syrophenician woman was the beginning of Jesus' extensive ministry to the Gentiles point out that Galilee was usually regarded as a Gentile province. They confidently assert that the miracle of the loaves and the fishes, and all the other miracles done during this phase of Jesus' life were done to Gentiles, in an attempt to reconcile their theory that the "other sheep" were the Gentiles. They forget that Galilee was the province of Mary and

Joseph and Jesus. It was the home of most of the twelve apostles. The synagogue at Nazareth where Jesus began his ministry was in Galilee. Capernaum, where Jesus performed his first miracle, had such a large Jewish population that the Roman centurion courted Jewish favor by building a synagogue there. Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine, was in Galilee. Nain, where he raised the widow's son, was in Galilee. The sermon on the mount was preached in Galilee. But those who received of Jesus' Galilean ministry were all Jews -- not Gentiles. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

There were "lost sheep of the house of Israel" scattered in many places of the world by the Babylonian conquest of approximately 597 B.C. One such group was in America, having been led here by their prophets in 600 B.C. to escape the doom that fell upon the nation of Israel a few years later. The Book of Mormon is the record of their political and spiritual history. It tells how Christ came to them in person following his resurrection. They "heard his voice." They heard him say that they were a part of the "other sheep" of whom he had spoken in Jerusalem. Jesus taught them his law and his gospel, organized his church, taught them arts and sciences, crafts and culture, and ushered in their golden age of prosperity and peace which continued for over 400 years.

Jesus told these "lost sheep" in America that he had "still other sheep" who would also hear his voice, and who would some day be gathered into one flock under one shepherd. The Gentiles shall be grafted in, but Israel shall be gathered. No man knows where all of the "lost sheep" are. But there is no promise more frequently reiterated in the Old Testament than the promise that all these lost sheep shall some day be gathered and that Judah and Israel shall be reunited; for God has not forgotten his covenant with Israel. Typical of many such prophecies is Jeremiah 23: verses 7 and 8, with which we conclude: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land."