

SHEEP-SHIP --- SON-SHIP

One of the most well-known passages in the entire Bible is the 23rd Psalm.

It is printed on the left inside of most funeral pamphlets I have ever seen.

However, this holy scripture was penned by David, with regard to Israel:

Psa 23:1-6 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The Psalms give clear testimony that God is the Shepherd to Israel:

Psa 80:1 Give ear, **O Shepherd of Israel**, thou that leadest Joseph like a **flock**; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

God's throne, located between the cherubims, will "one day" be established on the earth:

Psa 99:1,2 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

The Lord God will be the "Chief" Shepherd for Israel, as we'll read in a bit.

Peter was an "elder" (and a "witness") in the "Flock Church":

1 Peter 5:1,2 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you (that's what a "pastor" does), taking the oversight (that's what a "bishop" does) thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

We'll come back to this passage in a minute,

but let's notice that Peter instructs for the "elders" to "feed" the "flock."

A "flock" is naturally, and metaphorically, of course, guided by a "shepherd"

.... which is the same word as "pastor"

and also notice that the "flock" also has "overseers"

.... which is the same word as "bishops".

Therefore, it is logical that also in Peter's epistle,

Jesus would be called both Shepherd and Bishop for Israel:

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

Now go back to the passage in 1 Peter 5,

to see that Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd":

1 Peter 5:3,4 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Jesus is known as Israel's "Chief Shepherd"

because Israel had "other" shepherds, some of which were "unfaithful":

Ezek 34:8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

God judged Israel and spread them apart:

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.

James testified that Israel was still dispersed among the nations, when he addressed his letter to them:

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

Peter wrote his first epistle to the "strangers scattered."

Actually, through Paul's writing,

we learn that James, Peter, and John all wrote their epistles to Israel:

Gal 2:9 And when James, Cephas (that was a name given to Simon Peter by Jesus in John 1:42), and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they (James, Peter, and John) unto the circumcision (whom we know is Israel).

But, in the Lord's Day God will gather His sheep,

reverse the wrong to set it right

and David will be resurrected "in that day" to be Israel's shepherd:

Ezek 34:22-26 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

23 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**.

24 And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

25 And I will make with them a covenant 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.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Did you ever sing that song? That verse is where it originated.

It applied to the nation Israel, not us Gentiles in the dispensation of grace.

Yes, in the day of the Lord, Israel will be well taken care of:

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.

I've sung that verse in a song also.

But now I know that it doesn't apply to me.

Those verses are all true but people take false comfort by thinking that God is going to make it happen for them today under grace!

Truly, though God cast Israel away

in His day, He will bring them back to Himself:

Jer 31:10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

John the Baptist demonstrated by water baptism that Jesus came to Israel:

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

Jesus sent His disciples to preach specifically to Israel, God's sheep:

Matt 10:6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Jesus Himself declared that He was only for Israel:

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

In the prophetic program, "they" are who He came to save:

Matt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

About Mary's pregnancy, the angel of the Lord told Joseph that her child had a specific mission:

Matt 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Without question, Jesus was Israel's shepherd, and He died for them:

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

A few verses later, He repeated again:

John 10:14-16 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

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.

The "one fold" is the "dwelling place, the abode of shepherds and flocks."

Their "home stable" will be with the Lord in Jerusalem:

Psa 132:13,14 For the LORD hath chosen Zion (Mount Zion is the south-eastern hill where Jerusalem is built); he hath desired it for his habitation.

14 This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

1 Chron 23:25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever:

Just after the verse (Jer 50:17) that said "Israel is a scattered sheep"

.... Jeremiah prophesied that God would return them to their "meadow":

Jer 50:19 And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

We already read the "one shepherd" prophecy in Ezek 34:23.

The "one fold" with "one shepherd" will be "one nation" with "one king".

They will be "one stick" in God's hand:

Ezek 37:19,21,22 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

In the day of Jacob's trouble, God promised to bring Israel back:

Jer 30:9,10 But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

Throughout the scripture, Israel alone has always been God's sheep:

Psa 79:13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

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

Though many traditional religious denominational so-called "pastors" teach that the believing Gentiles turn into "sheep" --- However in scripture, Gentiles were called "dogs" (Matt 15:22-27).

Let's read **John 10:16** again: 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 believe the "other sheep" are those of Israel, who have died, and will be resurrected to enter the earthly kingdom. They would not be of the "Living Fold," but of the "Dead Fold" (yet they are still in Israel's program):

John 5:25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

John 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

They would be the saints, in the Prophecy Program, whose souls will return to earth when God's Kingdom is established down here:

Rev 21:2,3 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

They will rise to be collected in Jerusalem, to become "one fold" there:

Zech 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

Those who were scattered far away from the "Jerusalem Fold" will be brought back there:

Dan 9:7 O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

Ezek 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people (that's Israel, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

When Jesus prayed for His disciples, He expanded His request to His Father that "others" who got saved through those disciples testimony ... (therefore, those folks would be in the "earthly kingdom program") would be "one":

John 17:20,21 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Quite simply, the "other sheep" of John 10:16

because they are "sheep" must be "Israelites."

Because God, through Paul, our apostle, used an analogy from the Old Testament scriptures that were penned (Psalms 44:22) to Israel, does not mean that the Body of Christ has now become sheep.

Rom 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

The phrase "it is written" is recorded 31 times in Paul's writings.

We certainly don't use each of those verses to apply them to us today.

1 Cor 10:6-11 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

We would not read those verses, and say,

“If we commit fornication, or tempt Christ, or murmur

then God will kill us, as He did Israel.”

1 Cor 9:7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

By incorrectly thinking, because the verse talks about a “vineyard,” we could then say “Jesus is the vine, and WE are the branches” (John 15:4) applies to us. That would be wrong.

Likewise, just because Paul’s ink pen wrote the word “flock” does not mean that the Body of Christ transformed into sheep.

Let’s examine the passage in Eph. 4, the only place the word “pastors” appears from Matthew to Revelation:

Eph 4:8 Wherefore he saith,
 When he (1) ascended up on high,
 he (2) led captivity captive,
 and (3) gave gifts unto men.

All those events were PROPHESIED:

Psa 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high,
 thou hast led captivity captive:
 thou hast received gifts for men;
 yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the “gifts” men were given

in accordance with the “Prophetic Program” for Israel:

Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

It is evident from the Acts of the Apostles that Israel's "things" overlapped into the time frame when the dispensation of grace was starting up since the salvation of Saul (Paul) in Acts chapter 9:

In **Acts 10:44-48**, Peter astonished a group of Jews when he told them that the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Gentiles, and they spoke in tongues, and Peter commanded them to be water baptized.

Next, we see 3 reasons "why" Christ gave the gifts:

Eph 4:12 For the perfecting (maturing) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Some saints, who were alive at that time in history, were in Israel's program before Paul was even saved:

Rom 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

For example, Apollos knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25).

Yet after Aquila and Priscilla, also Paul's helpers (Rom 16:3), taught Apollos further revelation he then joined in Paul's ministry:

Acts 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

The Corinthian church was obviously of a "mixed" assembly some in Israel's program, and some in the Body of Christ.

But Paul didn't want them quarrelling over which program they were in:

1 Cor 3:4,5 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Regardless of which program a particular person would have been in, the "big issue" was the secure hope of everlasting life with God

rather than burning in the tormenting flames of hell for eternity:

1 Cor 3:22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas (Peter), or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;
23 And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

Other people, who were also alive then, were in the dispensation of grace. Those folks had been saved by Paul's gospel.

Next, let's look at "how long" the specially-given gifts were to operate:

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

They were active during the time that Israel was diminishing, and the Body of Christ was beginning.

Signs, miracles, and special gifts were all in operation then.

The holy scriptures were being written, finalized, authenticated, compiled, copied, and distributed.

The gifts were to function during that time until the men died out that Christ gave them to. That's why Paul told the Corinthians:

1 Cor 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Even though, earlier, Paul told them that those gifts would terminate:

1 Cor 13:8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

They were instrumental during the time of “partial knowledge and partial revelation” **UNTIL** the completed canon of scriptures was made:

1 Cor 13:9,10 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

God’s entire Word is what “perfects” a man and “accesses” him to understanding God’s programs thus, enabling unity among believers:

2 Tim 3:16,17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Let’s read Eph 4:13 again, with that thought in mind:

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

When the scriptures were complete,

God purposed for His children to “grow up” to be “ADULTS”

Eph 4:14,15 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may **grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Now that God’s revelation is “full,” His saints can be “fully developed” and thereby, work together with each other in one accord:

Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

God provided nourishment for growth and maturity in His Word.

Jesus taught His followers to become as humble, little children:

Matt 18:2-4 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

They were encouraged to be as little children:

Matt 19:13,14 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus called His 11 disciples "little children" after Judas Iscariot left the last supper (John 13:33).

John called his readers "little children" 9 times in his 1st epistle.

Little children need caretakers, as sheep do. They need to be led, and fed:

Hos 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Jer 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Once, Paul used the term "little children" as the Galatians were fragile in grace. They were "bewitched" (Gal 3:1) to go under the law:

Gal 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Gal 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

The Galatians were "fallen from grace" (Gal 5:4). They were immature.

Paul scolded the Corinthian saints for behaving like babies:

1 Cor 3:1,2 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

God certainly intended for them to "grow up":

1 Cor 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

1 Cor 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Warfare is not suitable for children. It takes strong, faithful men:

2 Tim 2:1-3 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

So, rather than being "sheepish" sheep

let's be what we should be "manly" men!

This is David Dowell, saying, "Think about it!"

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