

THE ONE LOST SHEEP SAVED.

The parable of the one lost sheep is supposed by some to teach that God will pursue every sinner and ultimately bring the lost one back into the fold of God. But does the parable teach this?

By no means. A sheep, a docile creature, always represents one who wills to be in harmony with God and in the fold. A goat is the Lord's symbol for the wayward and wilful. This is clearly shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats, in which the Lord represents himself as the shepherd of the *sheep* who selects them from the goat class. The parable shows how at the close of the Millennium those found to be sheep will be received into lasting life prepared for such, while all who shall then have proved themselves goats, preferring sin, shall be cut off from life, with Satan, whose servants or messengers they will be considered.

While the Lord died for *all*, and will give all the fullest opportunity to know of him and his fold and his laws for his sheep, and to become his sheep, yet it is those whom he foresees will become his sheep [R1217 : page 1] that he is really seeking.

In the parable, who, shall we say, are represented by the ninety-nine sheep, the "ninety-nine *just* persons, who need no repentance?" (Luke 15:4,7.) Surely none of humanity are among these ninety-nine, for "*all we* like sheep have gone astray." (Isa. 53:6.) "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10.) This parable is wider than some have seen. It includes the perfect angels of God who left not their first estate, who went not astray, who were never lost. Our Lord left these and came to earth to seek and to recover *man* – the lost sheep.

Mankind as a whole is lost – men feel themselves lost and want back to the fold; and as a whole mankind is to be found or

brought fully under the tender Shepherd's care, in the times of restitution. But any who, after coming to a knowledge of the truth, after being found and rescued by the Shepherd, follow him not, but prefer to follow Satan, will no longer be counted the Lord's sheep; for his sheep are those who hear his voice and follow him, and only such. And we have every reason to believe that the vast majority of mankind – the one sheep – will be brought back to the fold.

The idea of some, however, that God has a certain amount of pride in the matter and that on this account he will coerce the last one, even Satan, is attributing to God the weaknesses of the one who thus reasons. Human pride and ambition "not to be beat" does indeed so think and act often, but it is not so with God. He seeketh such to worship him as worship willingly, lovingly, in spirit and in truth, and he seeketh not the worship of others.

The Pharisees got that idea once and boasted to the Lord that they were sure of God's favor because they were children of Abraham. But he very pointedly answered that if God could get no better children for Abraham from among his literal sons, he would create children out of stones rather than recognize them, whom he denominated children of the devil, because his course they followed and his works they did. – See Matt. 3:9; John 8:44.
