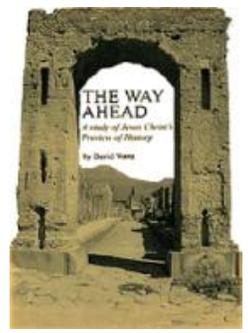
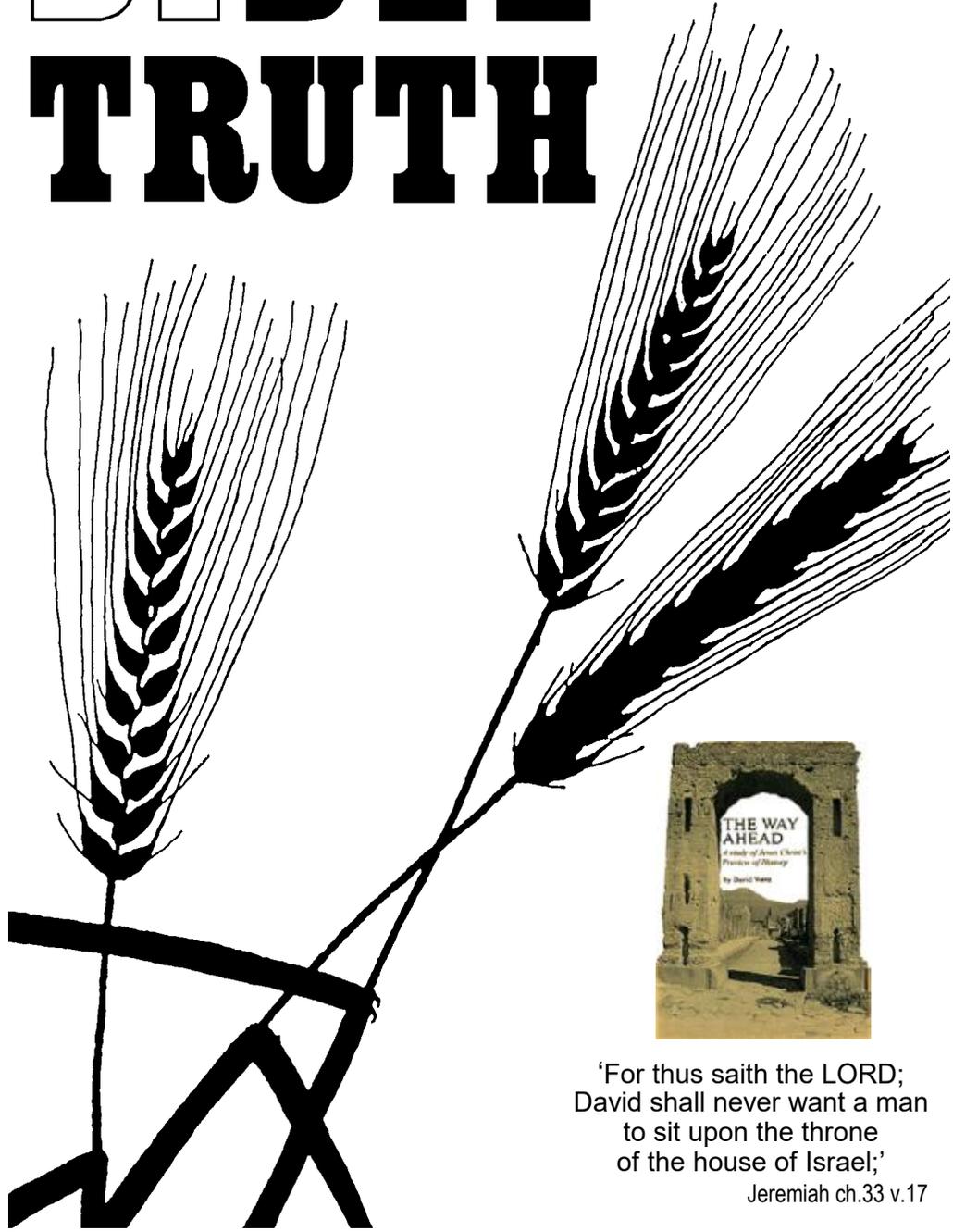


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'For thus saith the LORD;
David shall never want a man
to sit upon the throne
of the house of Israel;'

Jeremiah ch.33 v.17

WHO ARE THE SHEEP ?

by John Trotter

'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.'

John ch.10 v.16



Starting with the premise that the Scriptures are primarily concerned with Israel, how confident can we be that the word 'sheep' refers to only Israel. Some might refer to the Apostle John and say that the phrase 'other sheep' refers to other nations when in fact the word 'other' means 'of the same kind'. The word 'fold' means 'yard'.

The fold that Jesus was referring to, were those people of Judah who were living in the area where Jesus lived, specifically to those of the religious centres. The phrase 'other sheep' I believe, meant the other tribes of Israel scattered throughout the surrounding areas and further afield. It was to these people that the Gospel of the Kingdom had to be sent. This issue was of major concern between Peter and Paul.

There are two verses that need to be referred to.

'But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'

Matthew ch.10 v.6

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

Matthew ch.15 v.24

What clearer words do you need? The word 'lost' here means to be cast away or separated and in the process be punished. It does not mean to be totally obliterated off this planet and in their place other nations taking Israel's place. Neither does the false replacement theology, i.e. the church taking the place of Israel fit the meaning of the word lost. It would have been a cruel hoax by Christ if He had sent his disciples to a castaway people who did not exist.

The following verses from the Old Testament support the meaning of the word 'lost'. Isaiah ch.53 v.6, Jeremiah ch.50 vv 6 & 17 and Ezekiel ch.34 vv 5-6 & 16. It is in 1 Peter ch.2 v.25 we have a reference to the straying sheep and in 1 Peter ch.1 v.1 strangers who have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, namely Jesus Christ. This all came about due to the spreading message of

the Gospel of the Kingdom during that tumultuous and cruel period of church history.

It is a sad historical fact that the first love of the sheep towards Christ and His message was lost during later periods in history. Nevertheless the great Shepherd of the sheep has always had His remnant who maintained a witness during periods of great oppression. Much of this struggle and witness has been kept from the public. Men like John Wycliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation during the 14th century, were needed to arouse the people from their slumber and moral deprivation.

It is hoped from the above few details I have shown, that the Biblical Israel as a nation are symbolised as sheep. The questions that need to be asked are as follows. Where is this sheep nation now in history and which nations have carried out the work of Christian missionary effort in the name of Christ? There are many other national aspects to this mystery. The answer to the question, Who are the sheep?, is to be found amongst a people who have not as a nation realised their God given role. Even though their history is far from perfect due to disobedience and the tares that have been allowed to grow amongst them, God has still separated a remnant for His grand plan of a future earthly Kingdom where Christ will reign 'over the house of Jacob (His sheep) for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke ch.1 v.33). It will be only then that the earth will be blessed with peace and justice. It is hoped that the above article will stimulate your mind for a greater understanding.
