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GROUP STUDY GUIDE

The Lost Sheep

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching begins by explaining that understanding the division of Israel into the northern kingdom (the House of Israel/Ephraim) and the southern kingdom (the House of Judah) is foundational for understanding the entire Bible. It encourages believers to approach Scripture with humility, reasoning from the Scriptures as the Bereans did rather than defending long-held traditions. The teaching argues that the Old Testament provides the framework for correctly interpreting the New Testament.

The teaching traces God's covenant promises from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and then to Israel's twelve sons. Special attention is given to Ephraim, who received the firstborn blessing and was prophesied to become the "fullness of the nations." After Israel's exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah, and the additional covenant in Deuteronomy, God warned that disobedience would result in Israel being scattered among the nations but also promised a future restoration when His people returned to Him.

Following the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the kingdom divided. The northern kingdom followed Jeroboam into idolatry and was eventually conquered by Assyria. God declared that the northern kingdom was "not My people" and later described them as having received a certificate of divorce. Judah likewise fell into disobedience and was exiled to Babylon, though a remnant eventually returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. The teaching explains that while Judah returned to the land, the northern kingdom gradually became assimilated among the nations and eventually became the "lost sheep of Israel."

The teaching then explores the legal problem created by God's divorce of the northern kingdom. According to Deuteronomy 24, a husband cannot remarry a divorced wife who has become defiled. Since God cannot violate His own Torah, the prophets' promises that Israel would be restored created a mystery that remained unresolved until the coming of

Messiah. Romans 7 is presented as the explanation: death releases both parties from the marriage covenant. Yeshua's death made it possible for the divorced northern kingdom to be restored without God violating His own law.

The teaching presents Yeshua's mission as seeking and saving the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His death and resurrection provided the means for reconciliation, allowing those who were spiritually dead because of sin to be brought back into covenant. The lesson explains that many of the metaphors used throughout Scripture—including shepherd, bridegroom, lamb, and Son of God—work together to illustrate this plan of redemption rather than competing with one another.

Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is then explained as the ministry of reconciliation. The teaching argues that many Gentiles were descendants of the dispersed northern kingdom who had become assimilated among the nations, while others joined themselves to Israel by faith, just as the mixed multitude did during the Exodus. Paul's message was to reconcile both houses of Israel into one body through Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies of Ezekiel's two sticks becoming one nation again under one Shepherd.

Finally, the teaching emphasizes that God's concern has always been faithful obedience rather than physical ancestry. True children of Abraham are identified by walking in Abraham's faith—a faith demonstrated through obedience to God's commandments. Whether Jew or Gentile by physical lineage, all who come to God through Messiah become part of one people, one flock, and one faith under the everlasting covenant, awaiting the complete restoration of all Israel.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Bible reveals one God, one people, one faith, and one Shepherd.
- Understanding the division of Israel is foundational to understanding Scripture.
- God's covenant promises passed from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob, and Israel's descendants.
- Ephraim was prophesied to become the "fullness of the nations."
- God warned that disobedience would result in Israel being scattered among the nations.
- After Solomon's reign, Israel divided into the House of Israel (northern kingdom) and the House of Judah (southern kingdom).
- The northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria and eventually became the "lost sheep of Israel."
- Judah returned from Babylon but later elevated human traditions alongside God's commandments.
- God issued the northern kingdom a certificate of divorce because of persistent idolatry.

- Deuteronomy 24 created the legal dilemma of how God could restore His divorced people without violating His own Torah.
- Messiah's death fulfilled the legal requirement that released the marriage covenant and made reconciliation possible.
- Yeshua came to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- Paul was entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, proclaiming the gospel among the Gentiles.
- The gospel fulfills the prophetic promise of reuniting the two houses of Israel into one people.
- Ezekiel's prophecy of the two sticks points to the restoration of one united nation under one King.
- Physical ancestry does not determine covenant standing; faithful obedience does.
- Abraham is the model of faith because his faith was demonstrated through obedience.
- Jew and Gentile alike become one body through Messiah.
- God's desire is to restore His people into covenant faithfulness.
- Believers are called to walk in the obedience of faith as members of one flock under one Shepherd.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The northern kingdom eventually became known as the lost _____ of Israel.
2. God changed Jacob's name to _____.
3. The kingdom divided after the reign of _____.
4. The northern kingdom was conquered by _____.
5. God described the northern kingdom as "Not My _____."
6. Yeshua said He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of _____.
7. Paul described his ministry as the ministry of _____.
8. Ezekiel prophesied that the two _____ would become one.

9. Abraham demonstrated genuine faith through his _____.
10. Believers become one _____ under one Shepherd.

Challenging

1. Ephraim was prophesied to become the _____ of the nations.
2. Deuteronomy _____ contains the law regarding divorce and remarriage that explains the legal dilemma discussed in the teaching.
3. Romans _____ explains how death releases someone from the marriage covenant.
4. God issued the northern kingdom a certificate of _____ because of persistent idolatry.
5. The Hebrew phrase *melo ha'goyim* means the _____ of the nations.
6. Ezekiel _____ records the prophecy of the two sticks becoming one.
7. The teaching explains that Messiah's death legally made _____ possible for the lost sheep.
8. Peter described believers as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy _____.
9. James addressed his letter to the twelve tribes in the _____.
10. The ultimate goal of Messiah's ministry was to restore _____ under one King and one Shepherd.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to understand the division between the House of Israel and the House of Judah when studying the Bible?
2. How do God's promises to Abraham help explain His plan for restoring Israel?

3. Why do you think the prophets placed such a strong emphasis on Israel's future restoration after exile?
4. How does understanding the biblical law concerning divorce in Deuteronomy 24 help explain Messiah's redemptive work?
5. What does it mean that Yeshua came to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and how does that relate to believers today?
6. How does Ezekiel's prophecy of the two sticks becoming one help us understand God's desire for unity among His people?
7. Why is it important to distinguish between physical ancestry and covenant faithfulness?
8. How does Abraham's example demonstrate the relationship between faith and obedience?
9. What practical difference does it make to understand that believing Jews and believing Gentiles become one people under one Shepherd?
10. After studying this teaching, what part of God's plan to restore His people has most strengthened your understanding of Scripture?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. Sheep
2. Israel
3. Solomon
4. Assyria
5. People
6. Israel
7. Reconciliation
8. Sticks
9. Obedience
10. Flock

Challenging

1. Fullness
2. 24
3. 7
4. Divorce
5. Fullness
6. 37
7. Reconciliation
8. Nation
9. Dispersion
10. Israel