

Dear Kay,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked who the other sheep are in John 10:16. "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

This scripture is taken from the Parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18). Parables, or short fictitious stories, were one method Jesus used to illustrate what the Kingdom of God is like. In this parable Jesus is the good shepherd and the sheep are his followers. Verse 16 informs us that there are two classes of sheep or followers. The first class is composed of obedient ones who follow the voice of their shepherd now. They are his Little Flock, who, if faithful to their call, will abide with Jesus in heaven. The "other" sheep are not being called by God to follow Jesus at this time. But they will become the Lord's followers under different conditions at a future time.

The Good Shepherd (Jesus) gave his life as a ransom for all his sheep, not merely the Little Flock of this age. Christ's larger flock (the other sheep) will not be a spiritual class. They will be gathered after the dead return from their graves and the earthly kingdom is set up. Our Lord mentions these other sheep in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46). That parable, which encompasses the entire Millennial Age, pictures the world's probation, or great judgment day. During that thousand-year day, a separation work will transpire. The sheep, who have developed loving, sympathetic characters, will attain everlasting life on earth, but the goats, who, after a trial period of at least 100 years, have not attained hearts that are Christ-like, will be taken away in the second death.

Since billions will be returning from their graves, the "other" sheep will consist of the vast majority of humankind. For Jesus did not come to save only those who accept him now and choose to follow in his footsteps, but he died once for all, so that all would have an opportunity to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. "For a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out-they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life (the Little Flock), and they that have done evil (the other sheep), unto the resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28-29) This scripture definitely addresses the two parts of the resurrection process, with the "good," or those who have chosen to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, being awakened to eternal life with Christ in heaven, and the "evil," or those who either never knew Christ or chose deliberately to follow their own wills, being awakened to a period of judgment on earth.

Some of those will be the inherently good people from every race and religion of the world. On the opposite extreme of the spectrum, those who deliberately committed terrible sins will also be on the scene. All sins, known and unknown, will be exposed at that time. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14) The judgment day will be a mix of all kinds of people with unresolved issues. Those who have done evil to their fellow humans, will need to ask forgiveness and set about correcting the wrongs they inflicted onto others in their past lives.

Also, those who had been sinned against must be willing to forgive those who trespassed against them. The cleansing work of reconciliation during the time of judgment will be enormous. At the end of this time of judgment, peace and friendship between God and man will be restored as it was prior to Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden. Then, as Jesus said in John 10:16, "There shall be one flock (composed of heavenly and earthly sheep) and one shepherd." "Then will I purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him shoulder to shoulder." (Zephaniah 3:9)

We hope we have answered your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio