

"To the praise of the glory of his grace"

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The ministry of our Lord, as recorded in the Gospel of John was preparatory to the truth of the Mystery, as later revealed to, and administered by, the apostle Paul. In John 10: 16, for example, He spoke of "other sheep," obviously Gentiles, but only after He had spoken of giving His life for the sheep, in verse 11. This distinguishes Him as "the Good Shepherd"

This was new teaching indeed, that Jews and Gentiles should be blessed together and to form "ONE FLOCK and ONE SHEPHERD." There is, of course, no organic unity here. The Old Testament prophets had witnessed that Gentiles should be blessed. For instance, we have several cited in Romans 15: 8-13. These citations from the prophets while bearing out that grace would visit the nations yet they do not negate the fact that Israel would still be the head and not the tail. Here, though, our Lord intimated that oneness of blessing which would result from His shepherding — levelling both. While being an advance on that prophesied in the Old Testament it was not yet the unfolding of the Mystery.

In John 11: 47-52, the overruling of the hand of God is clearly seen in the prediction made by Caiaphas, for the divine comment is, "And this he spoke not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Here we have the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit emphasised, spite of the unfitness of the holder of the office. Again, while there is no intimation of the Mystery here, there is assuredly that from amongst Jews and Gentiles there would be formed ONE FAMILY. This intimates clearly that the way was preparing for the eventual revelation of the truth that the saints on earth would be one with Christ in glory. Then again, in the prayer of our Lord in John 17: 20-23, does it not open out that something more than Gentiles rejoicing with His people may be expected? "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us . . ."

The testimony would continue beyond the apostles — the then remnant of Israel — and the prayer was sufficiently embracing to take us in. For in this our day we have been brought to God by the application to us of the apostles' word in the power of the Holy Spirit. This second unity is one of our abiding in the blessed mutuality of the communion ever existent between the Father and the Son. A unity of communion, only possible to those having the same life and nature as have the Father and the Son. The practical issue from this would be spiritual power reflected in the witness before this world of the saints — "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Please read Acts 2: 44-47, also Acts 4: 4, 31-35. Such the impact on men of this manifest unity, their being "of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common," that they had "favour with all the people. And the Lord added . . . daily," also later, "many of them which heard the word believed."

While blessing attended this expressed unity of communion there was the exposure of that which was contrary, Acts 5, calling forth the exercise of holy government. Holiness having been pronounced, "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."

Whatever the present sad state of things in the christian profession, nevertheless the world has seen the saints in true unity and has been affected to the extent that many believed. Yet however

blessed this has been, exemplifying — to borrow descriptive language from Hebrews 2: 11 — that this new company was "all of one," with the Sanctifier, the revelation of the Mystery was still awaited. This being so, sufficient has been said to support our premise that the ministry of our Lord has prepared the way for that revelation.