

IF YE HAVE HEARD OF THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH IS GIVEN ME TO YOUWARD (I. E., GENTILES): HOW THAT BY REVELATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME THE MYSTERY; THAT IN THE SPIRIT GENTILES SHOULD BE FELLOW-HEIRS, AND OF THE SAME BODY, AND PARTAKERS OF HIS PROMISE IN CHRIST BY THE GOSPEL. Eph. 3:2-6.

Now if you compare the above with your Bibles you will note that there has been a couple of changes. In the first place we have left out the parenthesis which takes up part of verse 3, all of verse 4 and nearly all of 5. It is much plainer to read it without the parenthesis if one is wishing to get the full import of what the mystery is.

Then another change you will note is that we have taken some of v. 5 and added it to v. 6. You may realize that in the Greek original there is no division of words or any punctuation, so these divisions are rather arbitrary. There is precedent for both uses here of BY OR IN THE SPIRIT. It can be the means of the revelation or inspiration as it is in the A. V., or it can be used of a sphere of blessing as we have here suggested. A personal opinion favors the latter, but each may choose for himself.

In Matt. 22:43 IN SPIRIT is used of inspiration. But Rom. 8:9 provides an example of the realm of the flesh as set over against the realm of IN THE SPIRIT. So it is used both ways. In the flesh there was both Jew and Gentile. In the Spirit there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

So those who agitate so much these days about the difference between Jew and Gentile and who insist that the white race is of Jewish origin, or that the Indians are of Jewish origin, or that all the British are Jewish in origin, all these are agitating in the realm of the flesh. They know nothing of the realm of the Spirit where all such distinctions have ceased.

A careful study of the Greek will show that the three-fold equality here has the idea of joint or together with. Now do not read it as if it said that the Gentiles were joint heirs with the Jews! That is not what it means. It simply means that each Gentile is a joint-heir with every member of the body without any distinction. The fact is, the Jew has become a Gentile or as one of the nations that he might be a member of the body in the first place. There was a time when the Gentile had to become a Jew to receive the blessings. Now the reverse is true. Israel no longer holds a place superior to other nations. God today is dealing with nations, Gentiles; and the Jew is no longer first nor does he in any way hold any dispensational advantage.

The Gentiles are members of a joint-body. What a contrast to the body mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:27! There it was not a joint-body, but some members had greater gifts than others.

Now Gentiles are joint-partakers. Of what? OF THE PROMISE IN CHRIST JESUS. In 2 Tim. 1:1, it is the PROMISE OF LIFE. In Titus it is ETERNAL LIFE PROMISED BEFORE THE AGES BEGAN. Once Gentiles had been strangers from all covenants of promise. Now they are partakers of a special promise made before the overthrow of the world! 41

If we are to understand God's Word, we must get the divine viewpoint. We must have some idea of the plan and purpose of the ages. We must know something of God and His character so that we may look at things as He would. Without this understanding, all truth will be out of focus and distorted.

Among our readers may be some who are called "shutter-bugs." Their wives may be dark-room widows, as some say. But these who operate the camera know the importance, not only of the correct focus, but also the correct point of view and the range of view or content of the picture. The fly sitting on the great painting in the museum could only see great humps and daubs of paint. He could not see why folks should rave over such a common thing. It is a matter of viewpoint. Are not many doing the same with the Word?

Let us look at the expression ALL SAINTS as it occurs in Ephesians.

1:15 Love unto ALL SAINTS.

3:18 Comprehend with ALL SAINTS.

6:18 Praying for ALL SAINTS.

These saints are nothing else but saved sinners. Eph. 1:1-14 gives the scope of the work of God in behalf of these who are in the dispensation of the mystery. You have there, the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness (seal) of the Spirit.

Now we do not look about and try to discern who are saints and who are not. In the eye of the flesh we are not to judge. We cannot judge, unless we see them as God sees them; in Christ.

In connection with the first reference, Paul speaks of their faith in the Lord Jesus. That came first. Then their love unto all the saints. Both these facts are a ground of thanksgiving on the part of Paul. In fact, it is a ceaseless thanksgiving. He makes mention of them in his prayers. Paul's prayers rose somewhat above his little wants and blessings! May it be so with us. When Paul starts his epistle to the Ephesians, he first speaks, BLESSED BE GOD...WHO HATH BLESSED US.

Sure, we should ask for light and guidance in the study of the Word. It is fine to pray for the power to speak to the unsaved. But how often do we stop to pray for the spirit of wisdom and unveiling in the knowledge of Him?

Are we speaking of our hope, or His? Our inheritance, or His? Do we think of our own things instead of the things of others? It may be that we need more love to ALL SAINTS.

This lack of love for the saints will give a man the eyes of an eagle for finding fault, but totally blind him to spiritual things. The remedy; love to ALL SAINTS.

Do we realize that we have been chosen...in love? Do we realize that we have been accepted in the Beloved? Do we have any comprehension of the great love wherewith He loved us?

All this love is of grace. It was not because of us and our merits, but in His Son. Let us be careful lest we deny others what has been so freely lavished on us.

-HIS EARTHLY GLORY-

When God was manifest here on earth in flesh, to those who did not know Him, He was just as any other man. To some He was a poor peasant from Nazareth. To the Romans He was just another one of those troublesome Jews. To the average man on the street there was nothing about Him to attract attention or to show that he was in any way different from the average man.

But those who came to know Him saw much differently. One who walked with Him said, WE BEHELD HIS GLORY. THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER. When Nathanael came to know Him, he said, RABBI. THOU ART THE SON OF GOD; THOU ART THE KING OF ISRAEL.

And what a change He wrought in their lives! When Zacchaeus met Him, all his wealth was as nothing. Mary of Magdala was turned from a life of sin and shame and washed His feet with tears. The sons of the wealthy Zebedee gave up their wealth and luxury to follow Him who had no place to lay His head.

The ruler, Nicodemus, was a changed man after the meeting at night. Joseph of Arimathaea, a very wealthy man, asked for the body of his Lord so that it might be buried in splendor. One of the centurions at the death of the Lord said that surely He was the Son of God.

On the other hand, some who came to know Him did not do so well. Judas loved money. Even when the Lord washed his feet, it made no impression. Finally a special favor was shown him before all the rest of the disciples in the giving of the sop. But Judas went out and sold Him for a miserable ten or twelve dollars.

Pilate was mightily swayed by the person of the Lord, but his love of power and adulation overcame all feeling for good and so he gave Him over to the mob to do as they pleased with Him.

All of the original 12 were from Galilee but one. Judas was a Judean. It may be that the 11 were all from the ten tribes which are supposed to be lost (?). We do not know about Matthias.

The rulers of the Jews, who should have recognized the Lord as the Messiah and presented Him to the nation as such, rejected Him for they had no place in their religious system for Him and His righteous teachings. They were the official representatives of the nation. But He came unto His own and His own received Him not. In their hatred they even picked up the common gossip concerning His birth and threw it in His teeth.

Years later, long after His death, one wrote of Him as being the Word of life, saying that they had looked upon and handled Him as such. But with all this testimony, the world still goes on as it did then. Some will admit that He was maybe a good man; few acknowledge Him as Lord! And yet His love and compassion arouse only hate in the hearts of many. They use His name as a by-word with the most filthy language man can devise. Even in the pulpits today, the gossip concerning His birth is proclaimed as the truth.

No amount of love and compassion on His part can ever change that hatred when once a man is determined to go his own way!

-THE THREE PERSONS-



HEAR...THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD (Deut. 6:4).

Some have wondered about this passage in the light of Gen.

1:1 where God is Elohim in the



plural. But in the Hebrew and even in the Greek there was a practice of using the plural of majesty. Another example is Heb. 9:23. There it means the one great sacrifice.

But the greatest problem to most folks is how that God can be one, and yet be three persons. This has been taken up as a war cry by the ignorant, and used greatly by the evil one to attack the deity of Christ.

The problem arises in the first place by ignorance of the meaning of the word person. As is often the case, words have had some changes over the centuries and today people in general are unaware of the basic meaning of many of the words they use.

Even in the Greek, PERSON had a meaning that was not unknown at the time of our Lord here on earth and when the NT was written. In the Greek it is PROSOPOLEPSIA. It can mean a mask; a dramatic part; character; person.

But the word person comes from the Latin words per (thru) and sona (sound). Again it refers to the masks used in the Greek drama and one speaking thru a mask. Hence one of the men might take two or more parts or masks or persons, just so that the script did not call for two of them to be on the stage at the same time.

So there is one God. But He has manifested Himself in more ways than one. He has spoken thru more than one character. So God has manifested Himself as the Father. He has also manifested Himself as the Son (Word). And He has also manifested Himself as the Holy Spirit. I suppose that if He wanted to do it, He could manifest Himself in many other persons or characters.

There should be little difficulty now in the minds of all of you about the mystery of godliness, God manifest in flesh. In the OT He was known as Jehovah. He stopped and talked and ate with Abraham under the oaks of Mamre. He spoke with Moses at the burning bush. He spoke to the prophets, and now He has spoken to us thru Son. It is a source of joy to those of the dispensation or household of the mystery to know that the Son has spoken to His bond-servant, Paul.

Since God has not been seen at any time in His essence, nor could He be seen or apprehended by that which is material, seeing that He is Spirit, it has been necessary that He manifest Himself in some creature form to His creatures.

Some have made the mistake of thinking that God and Father were the same and co-extensive in scope. But the Father is only a manifestation, just as Son or Holy Spirit.

It is a joy to know that the One who walked with Adam and Enoch, was a friend to Abraham, talked with Moses, and appeared unto Daniel, also walked the shores of Galilee with His disciples. He appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, and to Stephen at his trial, finally appearing to John on the Isle of Patmos.

-MEN OR GODS: WHICH?-

-BEGINNERS' CORNER- 10

Man does not have a soul. Or at least the Scriptures nowhere say so. But the Word of God does say that when man was made of the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life thru his nostrals, he BECAME a living soul.

If you will look at Appendix 13 in the Companion Bible you will find a study of the Hebrew word for soul. Likewise you will find the Greek word in App. 110. It will be a little confusing at the first to find the great variety of translations for these two words. But a careful consideration of all the references will soon show that the heathen philosophy of Plato and Aristotle have no place in our theology. A soul can die. A dead person is still a soul. Soul is used for the reflexive, self. Dead bodies are called souls, etc., etc.

The idea that man has an immortal soul has been the root of much error. It was the first lie of Satan. He says that you don't really die. He also says that we are to be as gods. So we have springing up the ideas of purgatory, hell, limbo, spiritism, heaven as a happy hunting ground for all the good folks, etc.

Centuries ago one man accepted the idea of the immortal soul, but the idea that some at death went to one place and all the rest to another did not suit him. So he invented the idea that all would eventually be saved. Of course this pleases the flesh. It is the outcome of human reasoning which is impossible without the knowledge of good and evil which came as a result of the eating of the forbidden fruit.

This reasoning today goes something like this; man does not have free will, God will overcome man's will by a manifestation of His love. But wait a minute! Has not God manifested His love in the gift of His Son? Look at John 3:16. The words SO LOVED mean IN THIS MANNER LOVED. It is the first time we have knowledge that God loved the world. His manner of loving was to give His Son. So we have the fullest expression of the love of God. Has it broken the wills of men? It has broken some of them, but also the opposite is true. A manifestation of love only hardens some the more and make them hate God. God was manifest in flesh among men and they hated Him without a cause and they were not satisfied till they had shed His blood. If you can figure any way in which God can manifest His love any more than in the gift of His Son, I would like to know what it could be. It is beyond any revelation or comprehension. The Scriptures are silent about any such idea. Even the ONE did rise from the dead, they have not believed, nor will they ever believe. They have hardened their hearts even as Pharaoh.

Some look to John 6:44 and fondly dream that God will draw all men to Himself. It does not say that. The Spirit has been in the world convicting of sin and righteousness, and few are saved. If all were to be saved, then all this preaching, missionary work, probation and testing would be in vain. Why bother? It is God that says to come and reason together (with Him). When men reason together, they end up with that which is way out of reason!

As we pursue our study of the Acts, and especially the works of Paul (because after Acts 12 we hear no more of Peter except the reference in chapter 15), we find without exception that Paul goes first to the Jew, and when they refuse to listen to his gospel, or stir up hatred against him, he turns to the Gentiles.

In the first reference, Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas said it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to the Jew. But when they refused it Paul turned to the Gentile. In last month's discussion we asked the question, "Why was it necessary to turn to the Gentile if he was on parity with the Jew?" Now we have a second question in this quote, "Why was it necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to the Jew?" If there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, as some would have us believe, why is the distinction always made? It would seem superfluous that so much attention should be called to a problem that didn't exist, if we would believe the modernist.

In Acts 10:36 Peter declares, THE WORD WHICH GOD SENT UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL PREACHING PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST. In Rom. 3:1,2 Paul says, WHAT ADVANTAGE THEN HATH THE JEW? OR WHAT PROFIT IS THERE OF CIRCUMCISION? MUCH EVERY WAY: CHIEFLY. BECAUSE THAT UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD.

If you will look in Webster's dictionary under O for oracles, you will find this -- The medium by which a god reveals hidden knowledge, or communicates, or makes known the divine purpose.

Now isn't this exactly what has been unfolded to us in our study thru the Scripture? God was revealing His knowledge, His purpose, thru the priestly nation or the Jew that they might be a blessing to the Gentile in due time. So of necessity it had to be to them first. The Gentile was, at that time, only brot in to provoke Israel to jealousy that they might bear fruit.

Jesus told the woman from Canaan that He was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. When He sent the 12 out (Matt. 10), He commanded them saying, GO NOT INTO THE WAY OF THE GENTILES. AND INTO ANY CITY OF THE SAMARITANS ENTER YE NOT... AND WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE YOU, NOR HEAR YOUR WORDS, WHEN YE DEPART OUT OF THAT HOUSE OR CITY SHAKE OFF THE DUST OF YOUR FEET.

Notice how this parallels the actions of Paul and Barnabas when they shook off the dirt of their feet against them (Acts 14:51). In 18:6 he shook his raiment and said unto them, YOUR BLOOD BE UPON YOUR OWN HEADS; I AM CLEAN: FROM HENCEFORTH I WILL GO UNTO THE GENTILES. At Corinth (Acts 19:9), it is recorded that when they believed not, he departed from them.

Let us not be confused into believing this grafting in of the Gentiles institutes a new order, that we can throw away the OT with its promises and prophecies as being outdated. Do we fancy that the Israelites, who had been chosen and nurtured by God for 2,000 years for a purpose, can so easily be set aside for the sake of a modern religion?

-THE EDITOR'S DESK-

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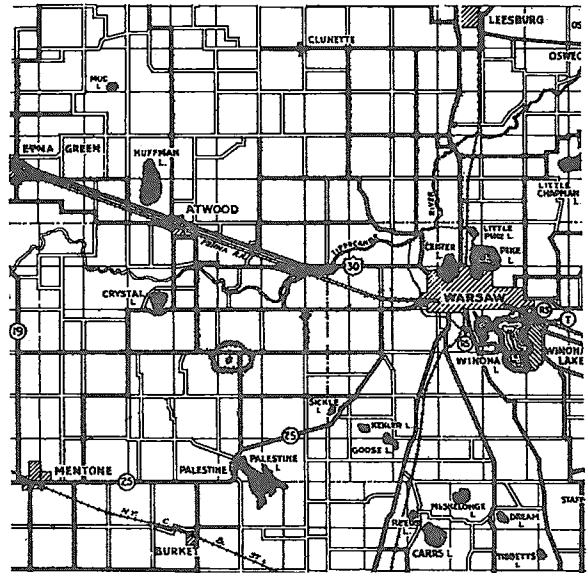
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