

“One Flock and One Shepherd”
John 10:16

John records an interesting often-overlooked statement of Jesus when speaking of Himself as the Good Shepherd. “I have *other sheep that are not of this sheep pen,*” He said. “I must *bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd*” (John 10:16).

A little later in John’s gospel, he quoted Caiaphas’ statement that “it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50). John then remarks that “he did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, *and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God to bring them together and make them one*” (vs. 51-52).

Contained in these two statements is one of the secrets of the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17:20-23). We from the nations are the “other sheep that are not of this sheep pen!” We are the “scattered children of God” who will “listen to [His] voice” becoming “one flock” under “one shepherd.”

The unity will not come through a Church that insists that Jewish believers now relinquish their Jewish identity to become one with the Church, but in a Church that identifies with its Jewish heritage. I must “bring them also,” Jesus said. The “scattered children of God” will be brought,” says John.

For centuries the Church demanded that Jewish believers who came to faith in Jesus relinquish any Jewish expression of faith and join the Church. No celebration of feasts. No observance of Sabbath. No circumcision of sons. No longer Jewish. But this is not what Jesus saw. He saw those from the nations becoming a part of the Jewish family of faith.

A life message of the apostle Paul, the orthodox rabbi who traveled the Gentile world to tell of the Messiah, was that the Jewish Messiah had now become the Redeemer for all nations. “Grafted in,” he told the Romans (11:17). “Fellow citizens,” “heirs together,” “members together,” sharers together,” he told the Ephesians (2:12; 3:6). Paul’s letters to Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse and Thessalonica, all Gentile centers, are continually referring to this *Christ (Messiah)* – a term whose meaning is incomplete unless coupled with the promises given to Israel, promises that from the outset were to include all nations (See Isa. 2:2-3; 56:8 and Zech. 8:20-23).

Paul repeatedly quotes from the Hebrew Scripture, even counseling these Gentile believers on their appropriate remembrance of Passover (See 1 Cor. 5:7,8). Why would a Gentile center like Corinth know anything about Passover? Because their only Sacred Scripture was the Jewish Scripture. They therefore saw in the Jewish feasts the foreshadowing of their own freedom from bondage and death. Jesus

had become their Passover Lamb who died in their stead, a connection that is being observed with renewed interest in our day.

A friend of mine is an evangelist having considerable success among Shiite Muslims in France. When they come to faith in Jesus, he leads them in a sinner's prayer. "I receive Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, as my Lord and Savior." He says that at first they are hesitant, even almost unbelieving, then they break out in laughter as they make the confession. He then does not have to talk to them about their relationship with the Jewish people. They understand that they have become a part of the family.

We think of Romans 9-11 as the "Jewish section" of Romans, but that connection is seen throughout the letter. In the opening chapters, Paul three times refers "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (1:17 and 2:9,10). As he draws near to the end of the letter, he issues a challenge that still has its application for us: "If the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings" (15:27). In his closing remarks to this Gentile capital city, he refers to the "mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings" (16:25,26). What is this mystery? That the Gentiles are now joined with the Jews to inherit the promises given to Abraham and his descendants (See also Eph. 3:5,6).

In our generation there is again in the Messianic movement a tangible Jewish expression of faith in Jesus, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. Ours is therefore the only generation since the first centuries who can give full expression to "sheep not of this sheep pen" (those from the nations) joining the original "sheep" to become one. As the Church in our day begins to appreciate this Jewish heritage, even celebrating the feasts as a foreshadowed expression of Jesus, the way many of the early Gentile believers did, as the Church from the nations welcomes back this "older brother" to faith in their own Messiah, we will be able to fulfill Jesus' vision of the "one flock and one shepherd" and answer His prayer "that all of them may be one... so that the world will believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).