

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #52

A VISION OF ABOMINATIONS

I BOW MY KNEES UNTO THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, OF WHOM THE WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH IS NAMED. Eph. 3:-14, 15.

Notice to whom the prayer is made. It is to the Father (Pater). Now primarily the term Father refers to the relationship of the Beloved Son. It cannot be applied to any but those who are in and identified with the Son.

From this word Pater comes the word patria, which is translated FAMILY. It is not from the word famulus which is the Latin from which our English word family comes. That includes the servants as well as all who are related to the father of the household. Patria is a little more limited and has reference to those who have a close relationship to the pater. Sons are much more closely related to the father than the servants. The servant could not use the term Abba, father.

The translators must have been just a little afraid of the import of the real meaning of this whole term 'pasa patria.' It is rightly rendered in Acts 3:25 where it is ALL THE FAMILIES. Note that in that place it is every family or all the families of the earth. We can assume from that that there is at least one family on the earth. From Eph. 3:15 there must be a family in heaven. So there must be two families. But as we study the Scriptures for the present age, we find that there is one family that has hope of eternal life in the new earth, and another which has hope of eternal life in the heavens. So at the present time there are two families, without counting Israel who are now set aside for a season.

For the sake of those who insist that there is but one family of God, we would refer back to Eph. 1:10 where in the fulness of times (yet future) all things (families as well) will be under one Head, both those in heaven and those on earth. The reader may think of other passages in this connection.

This is the beginning of a prayer. It is to be noted that correct dispensational terms are used by the apostle in the opening of the prayer. Not all families use the same titles of God and His Anointed when engaging in prayer. Check this for yourself.

The model prayer for kingdom saints does not begin as does this one for dispensation of the mystery saints. Yet it is the same Father, but a different family.

It may seem that we stress the multiplicity of families unduly, but we are cognizant of the fact that many who claim the name of Christ are unduly separative in this particular and will not tolerate any that do not believe exactly as they do. We must be kindly dispositioned to all who claim the name of Christ and seek to exalt Him. Even some of the disciples would have dis-fellowshipped those who did not follow in the same group with them.

So we must remember that in God's plan and purpose for the ages, more than one family may be involved and there is no reason for any enmity between the families of God.

While in Babylon during the captivity, Ezekiel was granted a vision which would explain why the captivity and justify God in His judgment of Judah as a rebellious people. In this vision the prophet was taken back to Jerusalem as it was before the captivity and shown the terrible things God's people were doing. There were 4 of the abominations, each being greater than the last.

Because of lack of space here, the reader should turn to Ezek. 8 and read the chapter.

1. THE IMAGE OF JEALOUSY. This was at the north gate of the city near the temple. What the image may have been, no one knows. It may have been that Moloch in which children were burned as sacrifices. Whatever it was, it was such as would provoke God to jealousy. It was probably set upon a pedestal right in the gate so everybody could see it, even from the north gate of the temple.

2. THE CHAMBER OF IMAGERY. Right against the temple a mud wall had been put up to hide these secret activities from the crowd. There was a hole in the wall and the prophet crept in. There was a room, large, and decorated all about with abominable beasts and all the idols of Israel, and creeping things. These were just like what were worshipped in Egypt. The room was darkened from the light of the sun, but lighted with lamps and censers. Here Ezekiel saw the 70 elders, the entire Sanhedrin, each with a censer in hand and worshipping the idols of Egypt. And all this right against the temple! He saw what the religious leaders were doing in the dark.

3. WEeping FOR TAMMUZ. Back among the heathen this was done by the maidens and women. Tammuz was Nimrod and it is told by tradition that he was slain by Shem because of his rebellion against the Most High. There are other versions of it (see The Two Babylons, Hyslop, in chapter 3 concerning Easter). At least, it is pretty well established that Lent is the outcome of the same thing, beginning about the 6th century A.D. Right in the temple at the north gate of it was this idolatrous practice being done. No wonder God showed forth His wrath.

4. SUN WORSHIP. Right in the temple at the very altar Ezekiel saw the 24 priests of the order of Aaron along with the high priest, turning their backs on the most holy place and worshipping the sun as it came up. Sun worship was the religion of Babylon. The son of the queen of heaven was always portrayed with a circle or halo about his head, a symbol of the sun. Nimrod (pictured as black and having horns), according to tradition was killed by Shem. The story goes on that after death he materialized and by his widow fathered the fair son with the halo. Also along with the worship of the queen of heaven was the worship of the Asherah (called branch here). The translation is a bit faulty. The import is that they stick this terrible thing right into God's face! See note in Companion Bible. Captivity was only fitting for such impudence. It was more fitting that they should go where all these abominations began.

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY #1

Have you ever tried to go thru the Prison Epistles and check or make a list of the things that characterize the mystery? This is a good method of study at times. Anything that organizes your material makes for progress.

Here are 16 items of the highlights of the mystery which are the result of a once-over made hurriedly by the writer.

1. The members of the household of the mystery are blest with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. Other households have been blest with material blessings and some spiritual blessings. But spiritual blessings are all that are mentioned for this particular group. This is the first mention of anybody ever being blest with blessings in the heavenlies. All other groups are to be blest on the earth or in the land promised to Abraham. Those that are to be blest on the earth have the new earth in prospect. Then there is a further difference here. Israel were to be blest in faithful Abraham, but now all blessings are in Christ. These vital items must not be overlooked. See Eph. 1:3.

2. The household of the mystery is made up of a chosen people. A chosen people is not anything new. But it is the time of the choosing that is new and unique. It is before the foundation of the world. This is the first this expression comes up in reference to a chosen people. The kingdom was from or since the foundation of the world. So as far as revelation is concerned, the dispensation of the mystery is the first of God's purposes and plans for the ages. Eph. 1:4.

3. Christ is the Head of the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22. Col. 1:18). Up to this time Christ has had many titles and official positions such as Messiah, the Branch, the true vine, the King, the Priest, the Prophet, and many others. But here is the first mention of His being Head of a body called a church. The word body as used of a group of people is not new, but that He should be Head of it is what is new. In fact this body is different from any other body mentioned. Its members are all equal.

4. In the dispensation of the mystery comes for the first time the experience of a believer being raised with Him from earth's domain and seated with Him at the right hand of the Father in glory. Up to the time of the proclamation of the mystery the identification of the believer with Christ was limited to His death, burial and resurrection. But now since the heavenly domain is thrown open to mankind, there is a further glorious prospect which no other household ever had. See Eph. 2:6.

5. From the time of the giving of the law at Sinai till the end of Acts there had been a separation between Jew and Gentile. It was in evidence in the temple where the Gentile could not enter the holy place, but had to stay in the court of the Gentiles. In the early church of the Pentecostal administration the Gentile could not sit with the congregation of men. Like the women, they had to occupy a separate place. That wall was taken away. Eph. 2:14.

STEPS TO A GOAL #2

Besides watching text and context, we should also seek to know to whom and to what time the words apply. The principle of right division must ever be kept in mind.

During the Pentecostal administration we find dealings with 3 groups of people, (1) Israel, (2) The Gentile, and (3) The Church of God. What is written for one of these may not always be applied to another. Of course there are certain fundamental truths which are valid for all dispensations. Try naming some of these.

An instance of how one should be careful in this respect may be found in 1 Cor. Chapters 10 and 11 are to the Jews and give rules for the keeping of the feast of the Passover (Gentiles were forever forbidden to partake of this). But chapter 12 is to Gentiles and has to do with the distribution of gifts of the Spirit. You will find the address for the former at the beginning of chapter 10 and for the latter at the beginning of chapter 12. You can find other examples.

Today, in this age, we find 2 groups that are the subject of Scriptures, (1) those saved by the glad tidings of John's gospel, and (2) those who belong to the church of the dispensation of the mystery. This study could make a book.

If we should go back into the OT we will find some written to and about all the nation Israel. There are parts to the house of Judah and some for the house of Israel (the 10 tribes). Gen. 1 to 11 is concerning the Gentiles before there were Jews or Israelites. From Gen. 11 till we get to Acts 28:28 the Gentile is off the scene except as he may come into contact with God's chosen nation.

Most people are aware of some of the dispensational advantages, disadvantages, and differences but get all tangled up with practice. Now bringing over into one dispensation the practices of another can be very wrong. For an instance of this is the constant fight Paul waged against Judaizers in the Gentile congregations of the Pentecostal times.

But one must not dwell too long on the faults of others. This can become a chronic attitude and as such can never profit anything. Paul was a master builder. There were times when he exposed error, but the far greater part of his ministry was building up.

But in order to build, one must have a foundation. Otherwise the building may not abide. One foundation has been laid, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ. There is also something further that must be done with care. The building material must be carefully selected and properly fitted together. It is this building material that must stand the test, not the one foundation. The builder is judged by the material used. He is not to lay again the foundation. There are times when we may properly point the finger at the structures of others, but we cannot afford to waste time tearing them down.

We have too many in the wrecking business. They go about from place to place tearing down. Some spend their time writing to show where all others are wrong. They never build anything.

JUST OR UNJUST, WHICH?

BEGINNER'S CORNER #18

As a Christian, are you JUST or UNJUST? That question may startle you a little, but it is well worth thinking over. In Matt. 1:19 it tells us that Joseph was a JUST man. Is that trying to tell us that he was a saved man? Is that what JUST means? Also in Matt. 27:19, 24 our Lord is spoken of being a JUST man and a JUST person. Does that mean to say that He was saved?

In Mark 6:20 John the Baptist is spoken of as being JUST and holy. Is that trying to tell us that he was a saved man in contrast to unsaved? In Luke 14:14 we have mention of the resurrection of the JUST. Does this mean saved people, or does it refer to something like the first resurrection of the Revelation which has to do with the overcomers and not all the saved? Were not the overcomers the JUST ones?

Another Joseph is said to be JUST in Luke 23:50. It says in the same statement that he was a good man. Does this mean to tell that he was a saved man rather than unsaved?

Now figure this one out. 2 Pet. says that Lot was a JUST man. What does it mean? If he was JUST before coming out of Sodom, what was he some time after? Did he backslide and become lost (as legalists teach), or did he become an UNJUST believer?

Christ died, the JUST for the UNJUST. Does that mean He died as a saved person for the unsaved? Can we use it that way of Christ?

Bullinger, in his Lexicon says that JUST means, "Fulfilling all claims which are right and becoming. A right state so that no fault or defect could be charged." Before he was saved, Paul was a JUST man according to the law. He was faultless, but not saved. So being JUST does save a man, in spite of the claims of the legalists. Today a man is saved by grace thru faith. Being JUST or UNJUST has no part in it.

In Luke 16:8 we have an UNJUST steward. Do we rightly conclude that he was an unsaved man? Could not a saved man have been just as UNJUST? Do you know Christians that bear watching in a business deal? See what I mean?

If you will go to the OT and look up the words JUST and UNJUST, you will find the legal aspect. Even there they are not parallel with the idea of saved and unsaved.

Again we turn to Bullinger's Lexicon and find that UNJUST means, "Not in conformity with right. Not as it should and ought to be; hence unjust, unrighteous." But again we have to be careful. Are righteous and unrighteous parallel to saved and unsaved? We would hesitate in this day, when man is saved by grace thru faith, to class saved and unsaved as righteous and unrighteous. How about yourself? Do you claim to be righteous? I do not feel that I can make such a claim. Neither do I feel that I can say that I as a Christian have been JUST in all things.

All saved people, both the JUST and the UNJUST, will have a resurrection (Acts 24:15). We do not know that in any of God's families the JUST and the UNJUST will be raised at the same time. If an earlier resurrection is the prize for being JUST, let us seek it.

It appears certain that God (Who so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth should not perish) would hardly close the door of salvation in the face of mankind because of the Jew's refusal of their Messiah. And if and when He did set aside Israel, He then in turn would open some other avenue that man might be saved. This we know has been true thruout Bible history. Noah was given a chance when the ancient world was destroyed by water; Abraham when the Gentiles were given up in the days of Nimrod, etc.

After the Acts period and sometime during his stay in Rome, Paul wrote what biographers call the "Prison Epistles." It is in these last letters that we find a unique and somewhat puzzling message to the Gentiles. I say puzzling because of 2 reasons. First, they contain a gospel few seem to understand; second, they contain words, phrases, admonitions, and a hope found nowhere else in the Bible.

Before I would try to convince the reader that these should be accepted at face value, as a new hope, I would like to point out some of the unusual characteristics found in these epistles that we might from this basis formulate some plan of doctrine.

In this letter I am simply going to point out a few of these phrases, as time allows, and then later we can take them up one by one to see if we can prove that these epistles are of significance.

The first striking factor that we notice is Paul's reference to this gospel, as a mystery to fulfill the Word of God. He refers to this as being hid in God from all ages and generations, and not made known unto the sons of men until it was revealed to him to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery. Now this is not the first mystery mentioned in the Bible, nor is it the last. So it neither makes it hallowed nor does it obviate the authenticity of its use.

Next, he speaks of this mystery as being ordained before the foundation of the world. This does not sound too startling in itself, until the references are checked.

Thirdly, Paul refers to this group comprising this mystery as the BODY of Christ, of which He (Christ) is the Head. Heretofore we have heard of the BRIDE, the WIFE, the Olive Tree, in reference to a group of believers, but now it is exclusively a BODY.

Next, nowhere in these epistles does Paul refer to Moses, the law, and the prophets. These have passed off the scene along with the Jew.

Then, too, Paul speaks of a heavenly calling which is something unique in Bible phraseology. Up until this time the promised land was in view, the New Jerusalem, and a new heaven and new earth. Nowhere was anyone ever promised that he would be raised up to sit beside Christ in a heavenly place.

Before we can rightly decide our position and hope today, certainly these must be taken into consideration and either accepted or rejected.

THE ONE BAPTISM

There are at least a dozen and maybe more baptisms mentioned in the Bible. These cover various periods of time and dispensations. It is our duty to find out which one or ones are in order for today.

But in looking over the epistles to us Gentiles we come across the expression ONE BAPTISM in Eph. 4:5. Therefore we are limited to just one baptism for today. To get the relationship, we must look at the structure of that passage; -

- A. One Body
- B. One Spirit
- C. One Hope
- D. One Lord
- C. One Faith
- B. One Baptism
- A. One God and Father

You will note that these go in pairs except for the central member which stands alone. ONE SPIRIT and ONE BAPTISM stand as a pair. So that may give us a clue. It is not water.

John the Baptist baptized with water with the promise of one coming who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. But all these were with the kingdom in view. Water baptism was in connection with repentance of Israel. Later it also identified Gentiles with repentant Israel. Neither of these conditions obtain today.

But in the structure above we are to remember that this is a unity. It is not a man-made unity. It is already made and established. It is man's duty to keep it. Water baptism is made with hands, so it is ruled out immediately. It must be some other baptism.

Also since it is a unity already established, the baptism is something that must be common to all believers. Water baptism cannot enter again for many believers have not been baptized in water.

Another angle we can take is this; what baptism is there which a believer cannot do without? What one is entirely indispensable? Our minds go back immediately to Rom. 6:3. Here is a baptism that has nothing to do with water. It concerns a joining to or identification with Christ. It is an experience that MUST precede resurrection and its power. This is something the believer cannot possibly get along without. It must be the ONE BAPTISM.

The first step of any believer is his identification with Christ in His death. The next step is burial with Him. And the next is resurrected with Him. These three points are taken up in Rom. and are common property of believers of the Pentecostal period. They also had the baptism of the spirit (spiritual gifts). Many were baptized with water. They were not limited to 1 baptism.

Israel will receive a baptism of fire when they go thru the great tribulation. So much for the fire baptism.

Death with Christ means death to the world and the desires of the flesh. It is the only way in which a man may enter as a member of the church which is the body of Christ today. It is only by this experience that one can begin to put his mind and affections on things above.

THE EDITOR'S DESK

ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM
SUNDAY, APRIL 13TH, 1958

- 2:00 Getting Acquainted.
- 2:30 Bible Lesson.
- 3:30 Coffee Break.
- 4:30 Questions and Answers.
- 5:30 End of Afternoon Session. Eat.
- 7:00 Bible Lesson.
- 8:00 End of Evening Session.

The place of meeting is the home of Truth For Today, southwest of Warsaw, first house west of junction of 100S and 600W. Consider this a personal invitation and bring your neighbors and friends. It will be an open house plan, so come for all or a part of the program. This marks the 10th anniversary of the Bible Class.

TAPE RECORDERS. Only 2 left of those mentioned last month. First come, first served.

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BIBLE CLASS each Tue. nite at 7:30 at the home of your editor, first house west of junction of 100S and 600W (southwest of Warsaw).

BOOKS AND BIBLES. Complete stock of the Berean Publications; some of Bagster Publications; E. W. Bullinger's books currently in print; and The Companion Bible in all bindings. Send for catalogs and lists.

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WE APPRECIATE all the new names and addresses received during the past 2 months. We just had 197 new plates made for the Addressograph. We also thank you for all the letters.

VISITORS WELCOME. If you have questions or wish to discuss some Bible theme, drive in.

PAPERS COME BACK when folks move and do not notify us or if they are not fully and properly addressed. We must have zone numbers too.

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