

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #54

STEPS TO A GOAL #4

THAT YE, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE, MAY BE ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS. Eph. 3:-17,18-

Many of you may have thought that we had attained the goal in the first part of verse 17, THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS BY FAITH. But we do not stop there. We must go on to a perfection, to a mighty comprehension of something that is all-important.

We must be careful that we see what is in the prayer proper and distinguish it from the connecting links or assumptions. Here Paul is not praying that they be rooted and grounded in love. He is taking that for granted. He knew those to whom he was writing. They were addressed as SAINTS AND FAITHFUL. They were among those who first trusted when the good news of the mystery was carried from Rome by word of mouth. So back in chapter 1 they were already enlightened (verse 18). Now he says that they were not only enlightened, but rooted and grounded in love. He had already given thanks for their love unto all the saints (1:15,16).

The word ROOTED implies growth or something that grows. That takes us back to 2:21 where we have a building growing. In chapter 3 we find the dimensions of that building that is growing up to be a temple in which God may dwell by the Spirit. The figure is carried right on thru. All the parts of that temple must be living if it is to grow.

The word GROUNDED implies a foundation. The foundation is set in love. In Col.3:14 we are to put on, above all things, love which is the bond of perfectness. However, do not think that love is peculiar to the dispensation of the mystery. In a former dispensation it had a very high place, too (see 1 Cor. 13).

Now with all this rooting and foundation, Paul is making a prayer that we might be mighty enough, be able, he says, to comprehend with all saints. At first that, one would be inclined to scoff at the idea of comprehension requiring might or strength. But knowledge and comprehension do take might. There is a might or power to usward who believe. It is that power which raised Christ from the dead (1:19,20). We need to make use of that mighty power which is at our disposal. It is needed not only for our comprehension, but there is a dark hour in which there is wrestling, not with flesh and blood (chapter 6). Today there are too many who think that power was for a past dispensation, a time when folks were endowed with power from on high to speak in tongues and work miracles. But that mighty power is needed today more than ever, but for a different purpose. We need power for performance of the good works in which it was before ordained that we should walk. We need power to overcome the evil one. But at this point, we need power to be able to comprehend some great thing along with other saints, with all saints. But let us be sure of the rooting and grounding. Let us not fail in the very fundamentals of the faith. All too often our "confusion" is just plain ignorance!

6. WRITINGS OF THOSE WHO HEARD HIM. These are the 7 epistles of the apostles of the Circumcision (1,2 & 3 John, 1 & 2 Peter, James and Jude). In all these writings Israel is still being called to repent that Christ might come and restore all things. The kingdom is in view.

7. THE MINISTRY OF PAUL. Primarily it was a ministry to the dispersed of Israel; but Gentiles were also included. We might better say that his ministry was to the Gentile with the conversion of the Jew in view.

8. WRITINGS OF PAUL. During this witness to the dispersion of Israel, Paul wrote 1&2 Cor., 1 & 2 Thess., Gal., Rom., and Heb., 7 in all. The King and the kingdom are still in view. In Rom., the last of this series, we find that Israel has not yet been cast away. The final rejection has not yet come. That does not come till the end of Acts.

Along with the prophecies of the OT, these writings are all summed up and come to a head in the Revelation which has to do with the end times and the setting up of the kingdom.

No prophecies have been fulfilled since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70. The silence of God has been almost oppressive at times. There are no angelic ministrations, no prophets, no miracles of healing, speaking of languages and the like. The Word of God has been finished and sealed up. Nothing has been added. All the characteristics of a past dispensation have vanished.

Up till the end of Acts there was a hope of the coming of Christ during the lifetime of the believers then living. He was to sit on the throne of His father David and rule the nations of the world with a rod of iron. Jerusalem was to be the center of the world, religiously and commercially. The land was to blossom as the rose.

But Israel has been a curse, a disgrace, scattered among the nations for centuries. The land has been a desert. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and even now is not in the hands of the Jews. Christ has not come. The throne of David is vacant. The nations are no better than they were 19 centuries ago; worse if anything.

Why all this silence of God today? What has happened? Why did not Christ come as was expected? Why is the throne of David vacant? Why is the land a desert?

Those who do not know about the dispensation of the mystery have no answer to these questions. Some still look for the coming of Christ today, many do not. Christendom as a whole is still hanging on to the hopes and the practices of a long past dispensation. They are unable to account for the changes that are obvious. With such a slim hope, they are unable to inspire others to any great degree. Their gospel is hollow, their practice worse. All is confusion (ignorance).

But Paul has given us the answer, if we will but read and believe it. Another set of 7 epistles came from his pen after the change. Read Eph., Phil., Col., 1 & 2 Tim., Philemon and Titus. There you will find the answers.

HOW TO APPROACH EPHESIANS

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY #3

The doctrine which is set forth in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians was not new to the ones to whom the letter was written. Many are inclined to think that it was new since here is the first place we meet with it in the Word. But before writing this epistle, Paul had been preaching the new doctrine of the dispensation of the mystery for some time at Rome. The message had been relayed by travelers and messengers to the various provinces. The Ephesians had heard the gospel and had embraced it. That is why Paul addressed them as SAINTS AND FAITHFUL (1:1).

In verses 12 and 13 Paul also speaks of them as having received and trusted the gospel which he now preached. Not only had they received it, but they had been sealed.

He also mentions the fact that the eyes of their understanding had been enlightened (1:18) and that they had been rooted and grounded in love (3:17). These all were in connection with their having heard and believed the new gospel which he began to preach in Rome immediately after the all-day conference recorded in the 28th chapter of Acts.

The prayers in Ephesians 1 and 3 which the apostle prays for them (and us) are that they might proceed on to perfection in the knowledge which they already have. When Paul prays that they may know or comprehend certain things, he does not imply that they never did know them or have any comprehension of them. He is praying that they may have fuller knowledge and a greater comprehension. That is growth.

When Paul desires to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10) are we to infer that up to this Paul had not known Christ? How absurd! The greatest need of the Christian, no matter who he is, is to know Christ.

So with these Ephesians and with us yet today, there is a need that we know more fully the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the most holy place, and what is the greatness of the power of God to usward (1:18-20). There is also a great need to know the dimensions of the building which grows up for an habitation of God and to know the love of Christ which is beyond all power of the natural man to comprehend (3:18,19).

So to many of you who read this, these truths are new; but they were not new to the people to whom they were written. Paul was fulfilling his duties of his ministry (4:11-16).

Furthermore, Paul was setting forth some much-needed practical truths to these people, some things they might live by. The practical portion is chapters 4, 5 & 6. It was needful to set forth in order the doctrinal facts upon which to base the practice. They are very carefully balanced. That in itself is a good lesson for us. Doctrine and practice complement each other; neither is of use alone.

So those approaching the study of Eph. for the first time should remember that it was not entirely new to those addressed.

13. Israel had promise of a land here on the earth for an inheritance. Her entrance and possession of this land was always in dispute. She had to wrestle against flesh and blood to get and to hold the land. That struggle is not yet over for Israel. Have you ever thought of what was meant in Luke 22:36,49? The garden was not the place to use the sword.

But the dispensation of the mystery is something entirely different. There is no wrestling against flesh and blood, and there is a reason. The earth is not the inheritance, therefore there can be no struggle with powers of the earth for a place there. The inheritance is in the heavenly places. There are beings who hold this place and dispute our entrance into it as our inheritance. These beings are not flesh and blood. They are evil principalities and powers under the leadership of Satan who, with these foul beings, will some day be cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-10). So the mystery is not connected with a struggle on earth with flesh and blood.

14. The overcomers among Israel and those partaking of her hope, might attain unto a high position with the Lord as a prize. This was to sit with Him in His throne and rule over the nations of the earth with Him (Rev. 2:26,27).

But not so with the overcomers in the dispensation of the mystery. For them is a prize of the high calling (Phil. 3:14), a crown (2 Tim. 4:8), a ruling with Him in their particular realm, (2 Tim. 2:12). So the prize for overcoming is of a higher and different sort than that which is given to earth-dwellers.

15. All who have the earth as their future abode will look for His coming from that place. They will look to the heavens, but standing on the earth. Their expectation and hope is the coming of the Lord to rule over the earth in righteousness.

Not so with those of the mystery. They will be resurrected in the heavenlies and stand there waiting, not for His coming, but His glorification (Phil. 3:20). This glorification and crowning precedes His coming to the earth and is, of course somewhat connected with it as to time. But it is something separate and distinct in character from any other expectation of man.

16. Earthlings were always subject to rituals which had to do with earthly elements. Altars, sacrifices, feasts, holidays, Sabbaths, baptism in water, and the like were a constant reminder to them of their calling.

But those whose citizenship is in the heavenly places no longer have to do with these elements. They have their completeness in the Lord. They have the reality and therefore no longer need shadows. The initiates of the mystery no longer let any judge them as to food, drink, holidays, moons, or of Sabbath days. Neither do they become subject to ordinances of men, for they died with Christ. Their affections, now, are set on things above where Christ sits. They walk in a realm where men worship God in spirit and in truth, not with elements of the world, things that delight the flesh. CONCLUDED.

ABSENT...PRESENT

BEGINNER'S CORNER #20

Great multitudes of simple folk think that the expression TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY IS TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD is in the Bible. They quote it as authority. They hold it a great hope.

It is exceeding strange that teachers (?) should take 2 Cor.5:8 and wrest it from its context and twist it to mean the very opposite of what Paul intended it to mean. But such is the case.

The mind of the flesh, aided and abetted by Satan, can do some very strange things. It will do most anything to the Scriptures to prove its desires to be legitimate. In connection with this text and its misuse is the treating of the parable of Luke 16:19-31 as if it were fact. All this in spite of Matt.13:34, ALL THESE THINGS SPAKE JESUS UNTO THE MULTITUDE IN PARABLES; AND WITHOUT A PARABLE SPAKE HE NOT UNTO THEM, and Luke 8:10, UNTO YOU IT IS GIVEN TO KNOW THE MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD; THAT SEEING THEY MIGHT NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND. Even Job 14:14 is twisted to make Job's change come at his death instead of at resurrection as in John 11:25,26 and 1 Cor.15:51,52.

Now let us take a look at 2 Cor.5:8 in its context and see what Paul was really trying to tell folks;

A. 4:1. We faint not. Treasure in earthen vessels. No boasting.

B. 4:14. Reason. He shall raise up us. (Resurrection)

A. 4:16. We faint not. Outward man perish. Only unseen things eternal.

B. 5:1-4. Reason. Clothed upon with house from heaven. (Resurrection)

A. 5:6. We are always confident. Cannot see Lord in this body. Faith walk.

B. 5:8. Reason. Confident and even willing to trade this body for new one. (Resurrection)

Thru all the ruin and crumbling about us and in our own bodies, the apostle is always confident in view of resurrection. Resurrection is his theme. There is no hint here that any one will ever be a ghost or spook and get to see the Lord without a body. Scripture knows no such thing. Men are not and never will be spirit beings. It is well to read carefully the 4th and 5th chapters again and note the progression of the argument in favor of resurrection as the hope and confidence of the believer.

So the conclusion of the matter is that in this present body, no man can see the Lord; but the believer will be given a new body, not an earthly one (made with hands), but a new body made in the heavens (of heavenly materials?). It is in the new body that the believer will be judged for what he has done in the old (5:10).

Now is it reasonable that Paul should go to all the trouble to argue for resurrection in ch. 4 and ch. 5 up to this particular verse under discussion, and then change entirely and do away with resurrection? Is Paul trying to tell us that resurrection is not necessary after all and that Christ is manifest in the heavenlies visible to spook believers now?

Referring again to lesson #19 and our study of the word FOUNDATION, it will be well to remember that all the references given are translated from the Greek word KATABOLE, meaning "to overthrow."

You will note that the usage of the word FOUNDATION was broken into two groups. The first (8) as listed, referring to things that had happened on the earth SINCE the foundation of the world; while the other (3) pertain to something that happened BEFORE the foundation of the world.

In the first 8 it is concerning the physical aspect of the flesh and of the world. In the last 3 it refers to a state of being or condition existing previously; or spiritual.

To me, at least, it seems strange if the word has no significance, as some argue, that we have this sharp division. If one of the writers of the Bible had used it exclusively in any one particular and others differently we could lay it to man's idiosyncrasy. This isn't the case.

In the first 8 instances we have Matthew, Luke, Paul and John using it as BEFORE THE FOUNDATION; in the last 3 by Paul, John and Peter. So we can't say it was any one man's idea. Then it must have been God's. And if so, then it is correctly used and should be carefully considered.

The next question that naturally follows is this: How is it that this reference in Eph.1:4-5 pertains to an adoption BEFORE the foundation of the world, while the one in Matt.25:34 is, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD? Not only does Eph.1:4 speak of it as being CHOSEN BEFORE but it is being raised up to a heavenly place, not to inherit a kingdom. The same writer, Paul, in Heb. 9:26 when talking of Christ's sufferings refers to it as SINCE the foundation of the World. So it was not his idea as to when plans were ordained.

John in his gospel, first chapter, goes to great lengths to present the fact that Christ was in the beginning with the Father; that all things were made by Him; which makes His existence antedate the foundation of the world. Then in John 17:28 Christ reveals this very thing by saying THOU LOVEST ME BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

If the reference in Eph.1:4 addressed to Gentiles points to a calling that was foreordained before the foundation of the world, then it must place them in the same realm with Christ (not equal). When this that is linked with others to be presented in this study, we are compelled, if we are rightly dividing the Word, to consider these possibilities.

The inheritance of the Jew was prepared since the founding of the world. By rejection of the King they lost it. Then Paul as an apostle of the Gentiles wrote the Ephesian letter. The way was now open for the proclamation of a new hope and calling which had been in the mind of God first. IN WHOM ALSO WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE BEING PREDESTINATED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL. ..DENTON C. ABBEY

THE EDITOR'S DESK

Well, ten years have rolled by since the TRUTH FOR TODAY Bible Class was started. It was on Sunday afternoon, April 4th, 1948, that we met for the first time. How well we remember it! We had our anniversary this year on the 13th so as to keep away from the Passover celebration. Then in July 1948 appeared the magazine, TRUTH FOR TODAY, for the first time. That September 28th we began a series of weekly radio broadcasts which lasted almost 5 years. Then we quit the radio and put our money into an offset press so we could do a better job of printing and at the same time reach out much farther.

We well remember how that after we had just started, a man borrowed a bicycle and rode out to see us. In leaving, he pressed a \$5 bill into our hands and wished us well in our ministry. That was the first contribution to the work, and entirely unsolicited, as have all been since. He was the first of nearly 400 people who have been helping with their means to keep TFT going. We have never really had a need. We just make use of what we have. God has certainly been good to us. We rejoice in serving Him.

We wish to thank all the folks who helped to make the anniversary meeting a success. There was plenty of food, flowers, and interest. A recording was made of the proceedings and if anyone wants to hear some of the program, they may borrow it (about 3 hours in all). We did not make a recording of the visiting and eating.

Also we wish to thank all the folks who sent their greetings and best wishes for the program, altho they could not be here. It is a comfort to know that so many are thinking of us.

Now for some other business. I know that many of you would like to have a copy of The Apostle of the Reconciliation by Charles H. Welch. But it is out of print and very scarce. So I think I can help you out. I have an extra copy which I can lend out. One should not keep it much more than 2 weeks. Get in your request, you may have to wait in line.

Another correction this month; our fingers went astray last month and added a 3rd epistle to the Thessalonians. Did you see it?

Our first 5 tape recorders went so fast that we ordered another 5. They started going so fast that we ordered another 10. Now this will be the last, for the supply is almost exhausted and no more can be gotten at such a low price. The retail price was \$99.95. We are selling them at 55. That is below wholesale. They are compact, light in weight, only one color combination, blue and white, takes up to 7 in. reels, runs at 3 3/4 ps., and are equipped with mike for recording. These are just the thing for use in listening to the tapes by Welch, Allen and others that are now available. We can ship as soon as we receive your order. We ship by express, charges collect. Don't put this off!

Now some more about the tape ministry. Mr. P. von Deesten, 357 S. Curson Ave., Los Angeles 36, Calif., is the person for you to contact. He recently told me that he has gotten the first copies of a series on "Christian

Fundamentals." These are by Mr. Welch and are made especially for folks in this country. They may be borrowed or bought. Also you may get tapes on Ephesians, Romans, The Pleroma, Acts, Galatians, Matthew, and some miscellaneous subjects. In addition there are studies in Daniel, Revelation, Hebrews, and Job which are especially for pastors and Bible teachers, but will be available for all later. Enquire about them. New tape chains are being made up and you can be one of the links. You get the tape, listen to it all you please and send it to the next.

Finally at last we managed to get Course A in Hermeneutics by Mr. Welch. We are in process of reprinting it and hope to have it ready by the middle of May. It will be 30¢ per copy. We still have reprints of Course B at 20¢ each.

FOR SALE; Some handy tools for Bible study. There is the Companion Bible at 12, 16, 18 and \$28. Send for leaflet. The Critical Lexicon and Concordance by E. W. Bullinger is very helpful in NT study. You do not have to know Greek to use it. It is \$12 in Buckram and \$16 in leather bindings. Then there are two others that are very helpful, either to those that know Heb. and Greek or to those who do not. The Englishman's Greek Concordance to the NT is \$8.50. The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance to the OT is \$17.50. Get the two together for \$25. They make a matched set.

REMEMBER, Bible class meets each Tue. nite at 7:30 at the home of your editor. This is the first house west of junction of roads 600W and 100S. You do not need any special invitation, just come. You are welcome at any time.

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