

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #57

NOW UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US, UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN. Eph. 3:20, 21.

Here is one that *is able*. This is no idol of sticks and stones or some man's idea of a deity with all the weaknesses and frailties of human flesh. He is one who *is able to do or to act*. The gods which the heathen worshipped could not do or act. They could not even move but had to be carried about. Even today men do not have a much higher concept of God. He is one who *is able to do abundantly*. This begins to take our notice. Here is one able to take care of our needs. But we left something out. It is *exceeding abundantly* that He is able to do. Sometimes we are led to believe that there can be no end to what people will ask. They seem to be able to think up the most fantastic things for which to beg. But here is one who can do exceeding abundantly *above all that we can ask or think*. His treasures are absolutely inexhaustible. His power cannot be limited by any description man can make.

So here we have the infinite powers and resources of God set forth. But in the preceding verses we have the *love of Christ* which surpasses all human understanding. We also have the *fulness of God* which leaves us in wonder. We can never imagine what it will mean to be filled with the fullness of God. But some day that is to be our portion.

So here the apostle has to leave off with his message of doctrine, for the Holy Spirit has gone with the revelation as far and farther than man can imagine or think in this age. When the revelation is ended, then is a time for praise, the doxology. And that is what we have in these two verses. *Doxa* is the word meaning praise.

Christ Jesus came to glorify the name of the Father. That work was not finished during His short stay here among men. The risen Christ has spoken by apostles and prophets. He has a chosen people today, the church of the dispensation of the mystery. They are to glorify Him and He in turn will glorify the Father. Then someday the church will be glorified and manifested with Him. But all is to the praise of the glory of God.

In the interlinear translation, the time element is expressed by, TO ALL THE GENERATIONS OF THE AGE OF THE AGES. There is one particular age to which all this looks. It is the crowning age of all the other ages. It is the time when all things will be headed up by Christ. It is the golden age of the ages. As far as any description or particulars are concerned, we have to leave it there. It is beyond our comprehension. So no further revelation can be given.

The last word of this doctrinal section is AMEN. We, too, can say Amen by diligently seeking to *walk worthy* of the calling according to the practical section which follows, chapters 4 to 6. Let us walk in the light of them.

## STEPS TO A GOAL #7

Probably there is no better division of the OT than that which our Lord gave us. He spoke of The Law, The Prophets, and The Psalms (Luke 24:44). Note the emphasis upon the fact that all these spoke of HIM.

I. THE LAW. Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., & Deut. These tell of the calling out and preparation of a chosen people who were to be a channel of blessing to the nations of the world.

II. THE PROPHETS. Josh., Jud., Sam., Kgs., Isa., Jer., Ezek., & the 12 Minor Prophets. These tell about the promised land and how the chosen race failed under kings and priests.

III. THE PSALMS. Psa., Prov., Job, Cant., Ruth, Lam., Eccl., Est., Dan., Ezra, Neh., & Chron. These give the inner point of view for the reasons of the failure of Israel. God overrules all for His glory.

Following the same general theme, we find 3 divisions of the NT; First Advent, Kingdom Re-offered, and Second Advent. These Scriptures also testify of HIM.

IV. FIRST ADVENT. Matt., Mark, & Luke. These tell of the coming of the King, His rejection, and His murder by His own.

V. KINGDOM RE-OFFERED. Acts, Cor., Thess., Gal., & Rom. In answer to the prayer on Calvary, the chosen people are given another chance; the end again is failure as they reject at Acts 28.

VI. SECOND ADVENT. Rev. At last they who had pierced Him look upon Him, repent, and the long delayed Kingdom is ushered in.

We have 6 divisions here, and 6 is the number of man. They are concerned with the earth and the nations of it. They tell of the future restoration of the earth, *not of the heavens*.

But look! We have omitted 8 books of the Bible. We need another, a 7th division here.

There is a gap between the 5th & 6th divisions above. There is a long time from the rejection at Acts 28:28 to the second coming that is still future yet today.

In this gap 2 distinct purposes are going on. Since His own received Him not and the kingdom was shut, John's gospel opens a way for everlasting life. But there is nothing in it about the restoration of the heavens and any family of God being blest there. Evidently the new earth will be the future abode of these.

Notice particularly in the 3rd chapter of John the great difference between requirements for entering the kingdom (3:1-12), and how to gain everlasting life (3:16).

That leaves us 7 more books, Eph., Phil., Col., 1 & 2 Tim., Titus, & Philemon. These deal with the heavenly side of the conflict of the ages. They have no connection with the earthly kingdom. They reveal a secret which had been kept hid in God from ages and generations till made known by the apostle Paul after Acts 28:28.

So in the present interval there are two, yes two, families of God in view. But do not be surprised that we have 2 gospels to preach. At one time during Acts, Paul had 2 gospels to proclaim, one to Jew and one to Gentile. So that part of it is not something new.

## THE PLACE PREPARED

I. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. John 14:2. The Lord has just said that in His Father's house were many *mansions* or dwellings. He is talking to the 12 here, not to you or me. He is not talking to the 70, the 120, or even the 500. All these may have a place in this eventually, but not like the 12. Only one of the 12 has seen this place. *The disciple whom Jesus loved* was given a view of it. He said, AND I JOHN SAW THE HOLY CITY, NEW JERUSALEM. That this was the place prepared was plain to John, for he saw that the city had 12 *foundations* and in them engraved the *names* of the 12 apostles. Read the description for yourself in Rev. 21. This place is a place of rest from their labors after they have sat on 12 thrones and ruled the 12 tribes during the great Millennial reign of Christ and the evangelizing of the world by Israel under the direction of the 12. So this place is a look into the distant future for them.

II. I WILL COME AGAIN. His first coming was in humility, as a babe in a manger, but God with us *tabernacling in flesh*. When He comes again, He will come in power and great glory. He will come with clouds of angels. He will come even as He left, and back to the same spot, the Mt. of Olives. He will come to take up the rule of all the earth from the throne of His father, David. He might have come again during the lifetime of some of the apostles. Especially did Paul await it. But the failure of Israel to repent has *postponed* that coming indefinitely. But He will come yet.

III. I WILL RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF. When He comes as a great King, with angels, and great glory and power, He will not forget these whom He has loved and trained for a great commission. He will receive them and set them in authority and they will go out among the nations and do that which has never yet been done (Matt. 28: 19,20). And how willing at that time will the 12 tribes be to aid in this great undertaking! Like Joseph's brethren, they will be greatly changed at His second appearing.

IV. WHERE I AM, THERE YE MAY BE ALSO. Do not mistake the language here. The Lord does not say that they will go to *heaven* at any time. He is to be on the *earth*, at Jerusalem, the same place that David had for his throne. These disciples will be there with Him on this earth. The heavenly calling of a later dispensation cannot be interjected here. Up till this time there is no word given anywhere that any believers will go to heaven at any time. You have to go to Ephesians to find anything about that. Note that when finally they come to the prepared place in Rev. 21, that it is also on the earth. It is prepared in heaven, but not occupied till it is on the earth. John 14 is not to or about the church. No one today can claim any part in it. But we can read it and be assured that even as He prepared a place for them, just so sure is He preparing another place or mansion for us, and that in the heavenlies. The Lord cares for His own, no matter who they may be.

## WHEN PRESENT WITH THE LORD?

In John 14:3 when is it that they will be with the Lord; when they die, or when He *will come again*?

When does He receive them unto Himself; when they die, or when He *comes again*?

Where does this receiving take place; here on earth where He comes, or somewhere in heaven?

In 1 Cor. 15:23 when is it that those in Christ are made alive; when they die, or at His *coming*?

If people go to be with the Lord at death, then why do they have to be resurrected and caught up to meet Him? 1 Thess. 4:17.

If they had been present with the Lord during death, would it not be more fitting if the Word had said that they come *with Him*, rather than to *meet Him*?

When is it that they are *ever to be with the Lord*; after death, or after resurrection?

When are the saints to be presented to the Father; after death, or after resurrection? See 2 Cor. 4:14.

When folks are dead, are they in the *naked state*, or are they *present with the Lord*? 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

Did the saints labor to be accepted of Him;

(1) In the naked state? (2) Present with Him? (3) Absent from Him? Which 2 would you say?

Do they appear before the judgment seat in the naked state or when present with the Lord?

Does Scripture ever make the statement that any would ever appear before Him in the naked state (without a body)? Give reference.

At the present time are all the dead in Christ with the Lord, or in the naked state?

What about David? Acts 2:29,34.

Now check carefully. Did God say that absent from the body is to be present with the Lord? 2 Cor. 5:8.

Does *present with the Lord* apply to the dead in Christ at His coming and living believers at His coming as well?

If so, then does that explain how that Paul could be absent from the body and be present with the Lord without going thru the naked state?

Now that brings us to another question. What was the hope of Paul at this time; to die and to be resurrected, or to be here at the coming of the Lord? 1 Cor. 15:51. 1 Thess. 4:15.

In the light of the above, to be *absent from the body*, as Paul used it in 2 Cor. 5:8, does not refer to death at all, but rather to the exchange of bodies for living believers when the Lord comes. Is this right? But could it refer to death in the case of those fallen asleep?

If that be true, then is there any Scripture that says that dead folks are with the Lord?

Suppose that the dead are with the Lord. Why bother with a resurrection? Does 1 Cor. 15:32 recognize any existence without resurrection?

Resurrection is the hope of the believer. Without it there is no hope. The unbeliever has no such expectation. He does not have life.

Note that all passages cited above are outside the dispensation of the mystery.

## HOW TO APPROACH JOHN'S GOSPEL

This book was written long after the door to the kingdom was closed by Paul at Acts 28:28. HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT tells us that. But the puzzle to so many is how John can be truth for today and at the same time have kingdom truth in it. *Careless reading* can lead to all kinds of difficulties.

What John says in this book from the standpoint of the time of the writing is indeed true for this age. But what he quotes the Lord and others as saying was truth for the time in which it was said and was for those to whom it was spoken. Look at 1:1-18; 3:13-21; 3:31-36 for example. These are spoken to the readers of the book from the standpoint of after Acts 28:28. They are for us today. But what the Lord said to Nicodemus in 3:1-12 was for Nicodemus and the people of his time. Nicodemus was told how to enter the kingdom. That was truth for that time, not for now. Later the kingdom was shut. So in 3:16 we are told how to obtain *everlasting life*. Do not read the dispensation of the *mystery* into John. It is not there!

The book is divided into 2 main parts. The first 10 chapters tell about the *Glory* of God coming down from heaven. The last 11 chapters tell of the *Glory* of God going back to heaven, to the bosom of the Father.

Also we can divide the book into 4 parts for study as follows;

1. *Chapters 1-4*. This section tells of the Stranger from heaven. Notice the 3 NOTS in the first chapter; HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT, THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT, DARKNESS COMPREHENDED IT (the Light) NOT.

2. *Chapters 5-12*. Here He is offered to His own. He shines forth in all His beauty. He glorifies the Father. Mark and study the 9 I AM'S in this section.

3. *Chapters 13-17*. His own reject Him. So He reveals secrets of the kingdom to those who are being trained to take up the work when He leaves it. They must know that He is going to die and go to the Father. They learn about the Comforter and His work. The section ends with a visit to the *Holy of Holies* where the Lord prays for all those whom the Father has given Him.

4. *Chapters 18-21*. His death and resurrection. Peter, the lost sheep, is rescued. Final directions for ministry.

Another convenient way to divide the book for study is according to the 8 signs. You can try that for yourself some time.

When the book has been thoroly studied and the contents mastered, one is struck with the fact that it is a message of hope to the Gentiles, the other sheep, after Israel had failed as a channel of blessing to the nations, the Gentiles. The hope is neither of the kingdom or of the dispensation of the *mystery*, but of an everlasting life.

Some day the 12 apostles will lead the nation Israel in world-wide evangelization (Matt. 28:19,20. John had a little foretaste of this great commission when he was called to write this gospel for all the nations.

## BEGINNER'S CORNER #23

Before continuing our discussion, I would like to take a moment and refer back to last month's article and the paragraph quoted from Eph. 3:8. It reads in part, WHICH FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD WAS HID IN CHRIST. This may sound like a contradiction, for you will remember heretofore we have been stressing the authenticity of this gospel age on the fact it was planned *before* the founding of the world. Here it states *from* the beginning, not *before*.

However further study and a reference back to the original Greek will give this reading. The word that is the key to the phrase is the Greek AIONON or the plural for AGE. So the original reads, THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY WHICH HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM THE AGES IN GOD. So rather than contradicting our assumption, it actually gives credence to it. It doesn't state from what moment this was a secret, but rather that it had been hidden in God until the time was ripe to reveal it. And this is almost the exact words Paul uses in Col. 1:26, EVEN THE MYSTERY WHICH HATH BEEN HID FROM AGES AND GENERATIONS BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST TO HIS SAINTS.

It may be difficult for some of you to accept the idea of the present age as being a time of mystery in the plan of God; that this age embraces a church that is new, and separate under a new dispensation, rather than being a continuation of the Jewish promises. I mentioned in one of the earlier articles that this was neither the first nor the last mystery, and we should not stumble at it because it has not been explained to us fully, or rather we fail to apprehend it, as Paul puts it.

In John 16:13 Christ is giving certain admonitions to His disciples, and the last line reads, HE (the Holy Spirit) WILL SHOW YOU THINGS TO COME. The disciples were to know further truth. So here was a mystery. Back in verse 4 of the same chapter Christ mentions that He has not told them certain things until the time was ripe. AND THESE THINGS I SAID NOT UNTO YOU AT THE BEGINNING BECAUSE I WAS WITH YOU.

Again we have the case of the parables given by Christ. For what reason did He speak in parables? If His sole mission on earth was to preach the gospel, then why at times did He hide it under the guise of a parable? In Matt. 13:11 He said, BECAUSE IT IS GIVEN UNTO YOU TO KNOW THE MYSTERIES OF HEAVEN BUT TO THEM IT IS NOT GIVEN. And He adds this in verse 17, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT MANY PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS MEN HAVE DESIRED TO SEE THOSE THINGS WHICH YE SEE, AND HAVE NOT SEEN THEM; AND TO HEAR THOSE THINGS WHICH YE HEAR, AND HAVE NOT HEARD THEM.

Another example is that of Daniel, the prophet. Israel were in captivity. They had not heeded the warnings of former prophets. But all these had not foretold the future. It is in the book of Dan. that we learn *How long it is to be*.

So certain truths have been kept by God as *secrets or mysteries* from certain ages and generations only to be given out at such time as the people are ready and/or willing to receive them.

DENTON C. ABBEY

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### THE EDITOR'S DESK

*We were just about crowded out this time! But keep this book list; we may not have another for many months. We have Bible Class right on thru the summer. Welcome. To new folks; this paper is free. Tape Recorders, still \$55 each. We are glad for all the visitors and letters. This finishes Vol. 10 of TFT. Ten years of it. Your editor is OSCAR M. BAKER, of Route 2, Warsaw, Ind. Telephone, ULYSSES 8-2684.*

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