

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #66

## STEPS TO A GOAL #16

WHEREFORE HE SAITH, WHEN HE ASCENDED UP ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE... 4:8.

Let nobody be disappointed if little light can be thrown on the meaning of this passage. It is an allusion to rather than a quotation from Psa. 68:18. The emphasis seems to be on the fact that the Lord *ascended*, not on some details we would like to know.

In the first place it is not just exactly clear as to whether the Lord had one or more ascensions. On the morn of the first day of the week He had not yet ascended to the Father. We have His word for that. Whether He did ascend to the Father before the visible ascension 40 days later is a question that is hard to settle.

Whenever this ascension did occur He led a host of captives. But to where and from where did He lead them?

Some think that the saints that arose from the graves at His resurrection is the answer to this. But His resurrection was not His ascension, so the time element does not seem to fit. You will find this account in Matt. 27:52,53.

Some think that men have immortal souls and that when He-ascended He took believing captives from Sheol and took them to heaven with Him. But John says an emphatic NO to that. See John 3:13. If that were so, why was it that David got left behind? See Acts 2:34. There is not a shred of Scriptural evidence that any man has yet ascended up into heaven.

But some may say, How about Enoch? That is another big problem; but he must have died. A study of the use of the word TRANSLATE shows that it does not necessarily mean taking to heaven. That HE WAS NOT is a common way of speaking of one that died. Joseph WAS NOT, Gen. 42:36. We do not know what death it was that Enoch should not see. Certainly not that of the patriarchs, for Adam died 57 years before the translation of Enoch. But that is the only one of the patriarchs that died up till then. In Heb. 11:5 we have this account, but in verse 13 it says, THESE ALL DIED.

Some may say that Elijah is in heaven. We know that he was taken up in a tornado, but where to, it does not say. Later he wrote a letter to the king of Judah (2 Chron. 21:12). We are told nothing of Elijah's death.

If these captives were not those released from the graves in Jerusalem, who probably had to die again as did Lazarus (so were not taken up to heaven), and they were not the OT saints (since David missed it), and since no man has ascended up to heaven, who could they be?

Heb. 4:14 says that the Lord passed thru the heavens (see note in Companion Bible). Is it possible that He took some captives from among the principalities and powers there and took them along in a triumphal procession thru the heavens to His place far above all heavens? We do not know.

Any guess we might hazard would still be a guess. What I think or you think *cuts no ice*. If God had wanted us to know, He would have told us. This is a good lesson for us, teaching us not to speak when God does not speak.

The Glory of God. At the time that Israel was chosen as a nation in the person of Abraham, the world was engulfed in idolatry. They did not glorify God as God. They forgot their Creator and worshipped creatures. They got so low that they worshipped creeping things. The serpent, beetles, and crocodiles were regarded as gods. We can see that all this was an attack by the enemy on the glory of God.

It was the God of glory that appeared unto Abraham (Acts 7:2). When God promised one of the most impossible things to Abraham, it was received with a great faith. Abraham gave glory to God (Rom. 4:20).

How could the nations behold the marvelous works of the Creator and not give Him the glory? Some day the nations will glorify Him for His mercy (Rom. 15:9) because of the reconciliation wrought by Christ.

So God instituted the Sabbath with His people Israel at Sinai as a witness to the nations. It looked back to the Sabbath, the 7th day upon which God rested from His work of creation. This would be a constant reminder to Israel, and to the nations, of the Creator and His glory.

This witness was given to a nation which was separated from the nations. Separation itself spoke of holiness and sanctification which alone can come from a glorious Creator. God would be praised for what He had done. But He was to be worshipped for what He was.

Idolatry is false worship. It is a misplaced worship. There is a creature who wants the worship of men. He even tried to get the worship of the Son of God in the wilderness. Men like to see some object that they may worship it, whether it be a stick, a stone, or a piece of bread. The natural man cannot comprehend the nature of true spiritual worship. He must have a place of worship, a priesthood, and a ritual, all having to do with the flesh and the senses. He must have an organization and initiatory rites for the joiners.

So a true worship was set up in the midst of the nations. Altho they had been given up and given over to the lusts of the flesh, nevertheless a day was in view when they would again give God the glory that is rightfully His.

There are two reasons why the nations today do not glorify God and worship Him as Creator.

1. Israel as a channel of blessing has failed. She not only failed to proclaim the one true God to the nations, but even failed in the true worship herself, and following the example of the nations, sank into the depths of idolatry.
2. The iniquity of the nations has to run its course. It has not waxed ripe yet. The mystery of iniquity has not yet been revealed.

Idolatry will be repeated at the time of the end. Then an angel will proclaim to men, FEAR GOD AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM... WORSHIP HIM THAT MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH... (Rev. 14:7). This is the final call to worship. Those who at that time will not heed the call, but receive the mark of the beast and worship the image, will have a dreadful end. Men will not always cheat God of the glory that is due Him.

## TWO MYSTERIES IN CONTRAST

## OUTLINE STUDIES IN ROMANS #8

There are two great mysteries or secrets running thru the Scriptures. Both center in persons. Each is manifested when the time is ripe.

These two mysteries run parallel. They can never meet.

There are some who claim that they will merge some day. But what concourse can righteousness have with unrighteousness? If it were possible that righteousness could some day include sin, then it is no longer righteousness. God cannot be the author of sin and at the same time be righteous.

Those who would push the false theory of universal salvation are like the Pharisees who said that Christ cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub. It would be a house divided.

The one great mystery is of God; the other is of the evil one. The one is manifested in Christ; the other will be manifested in the Antichrist. The world is deceived because the one is the awful counterfeit of the other.

The mystery of iniquity is exposed in the claims of the evil one in Isa 14:13,14.

*I will ascend into heaven*

*I will exalt my throne above the stars of God*

*I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation*

*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds*

*I will be like the Most High*

In contrast the mystery of godliness is expressed in Phil 2:5-9;

*In the form of God, that it not robbery to be equal with God*

*Made Himself of no reputation*

*Took form of servant*

*God exalted Him*

*Gave Him a Name*

*Above every Name*

The one says, I WILL. The other says, NOT MY WILL.

The one exalts himself. The other humbles Himself.

The one would ascend up into heaven by his own works and power. The other is taken up into heaven because He finished a work.

The one would not have anything to do with God, but would get above God if he could. The other shares in His Father's throne.

The one would exalt himself. The other is highly exalted by the Father.

The one would be like the Most High. The other came to earth to be the servant of man.

The one would make a name for himself. The other has been given a name.

You may be able to fill in more in this short study. It is well that folks who profess the name of Christ study the Word lest they be deceived by this counterfeit. Those who know are not easily deceived.

Most people are following the example of one or the other of these personages. The believer is exhorted to be humble, even as our Lord was. Pride is a great sin, the original sin that came into the universe. It has fathered all sins since that time.

Rom 9 to 10:3. We have been dealing with the individual. Now in 9-11 it is the nation. The question that might come up was this: Would Paul's Gentile ministry make him indifferent to the fate of his own nation? He is very emphatic in denying any such accusation.

This section, 9-11, gives a good picture of the place and condition of Israel just before the close of Acts.

1. The Israelites, the whole Jewish nation, were kinsmen to Paul in the flesh. This includes all the 12 tribes.

2. To them pertained the adoption (Gen 4:22). The position of firstborn was by choice, not by order of birth. Example, Jacob and Esau. Today Gentiles who believe are the adoption (Eph 1:5).

3. They had with them the Shekinah glory. This was the symbol of the presence of God.

4. Covenants were theirs exclusively (except the one covenant made with Noah).

5. Law was given to Israel alone. The nations did not have the law.

6. No other nation was engaged in the service of God. That was Israel's prerogative.

7. Israel could claim all the promises.

8. To them pertained the fathers; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See 15:8.

9. According to the flesh, Christ came to Israel (the lost sheep of the house of Israel, according to Matt). Note that this outline begins and ends with the term *flesh*.

God had a plan for the nations of the earth. He had a chosen people to work it out.

Note the attempts of the enemies of Christ to do away with His deity by various translations of verse 5.

Not all are Israel that are of Israel. Not all the sons of Abraham were related to the promise. There were 8 sons, but in Isaac was the promise centered. Then it was Jacob, not Esau, that passed it down to the 12 sons, the fathers of the 12 tribes. Here was the principle of election in operation.

This election is not by works, but by choice.

No one can boast of election. The Creator can make vessels of honor and dishonor and do with them as He pleases. No one can question that right.

Then there are vessels of wrath. They have fitted themselves for destruction, even as Pharaoh hardened his heart before God hardened it further. In Rom 1 God gave up the nations, but not before they had first given up God.

On the contrary we find vessels prepared for mercy. God did the preparing. No one can accuse God in all this, for what guilty criminal is in any position to argue with his judge?

Note that Gentiles are added in verse 24. No mystery here. This had been foretold.

The remnant, the true seed, makes possible the carrying out of God's purpose.

Righteousness comes by faith, not by works of the law. Israel made the mistake, as men do today, of seeking righteousness by the works of the law. The Gentiles found it by faith. This is why Christ, with His finished work, is a block of stumbling to the *flesh*.

## THE THREE GREATEST TRUTHS I KNOW

## BEGINNER'S CORNER #32

Recently I stood before a group to teach them for the last time. Some, if not most of them, I realized I might never see again. What should be said on such an occasion? The Lord seemed to place upon my heart the above subject. Following is a brief summary of those remarks.

**LIFE ONLY IN CHRIST.** This is where we begin. HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH THE LIFE; AND HE THAT HATH NOT THE SON OF GOD HATH NOT THE LIFE. 1 Jn 5:12. No, immortality is not something inborn in all men. *The gospel is more than just a question of better housing in eternity.* God alone has imperishability and immortality (1 Tim 1:17; 6:16). But Christ has brot it to light (2 Tim 1:10). We may receive life in Christ as a gift of God (Rom 6:23). The Scriptures make it plain that immortality is put on in resurrection, not before (1 Cor 15:53). For the church which is His body, it shall be in the OUT-RESURRECTION (Phil 3:11).

**RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD.** This is the command of 2 Tim 2:15. To fail to do so brings utter confusion in Christendom and in one's own Bible study. RIGHTLY DIVIDING is the translation of orthotomeo. Abbott-Smith's Lexicon defines it as "to cut straight, as a road." To rightly divide is the only straight road thru the Scriptures. It is simply a matter of keeping things (i.e. books) in their proper categories. How clear the NT becomes, and many perplexing verses therein, when we see the different categories.

1. Matthew, Mark and Luke present the preaching of the kingdom at hand.

2. Acts presents the re-offer of the kingdom to the Jews. In this category belong the epistles of James, Peter, John, Jude and Paul's first seven. They reflect that time when God was still dealing with Israel as a nation. Hence we still have many Jewish practices, right up to Acts 28. There should be nothing puzzling about this. Let us illustrate by saying that as long as we have a Republication administration we expect Republican policies and practices. So there was a Jewish administration till Acts 28.

3. After Acts we have 2 books, John and the last 7 letters of Paul. Salvation is sent to the Gentiles. John tells the world of everlasting life. Paul now BRINGS TO LIGHT (photizo) what is the administration of *The Secret* (Eph 3:9). Read carefully all of Eph 3.

4. Next, we have the fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to Israel and the kingdom. This follows the administration of *The Mystery (Secret)*, and is after the Joint-body has been united to the Head (Christ) in heaven. It is described in The Revelation.

**THE MYSTERY REVEALED TO PAUL.** Besides this right division, we need to see that God is accomplishing a secret purpose in the period in which we now live. A body of people is being united to Christ here in order that they might be with Him there in the heavenly places. It was kept secret FROM THE AGES AND FROM THE GENERATIONS (Col 1:26 ASV margin). It was revealed to Paul (Eph 3:3; Col 1:25). It fulfills the Word of God (Col 1:25).

When I started this series of articles some three years ago, a friend asked me what I was trying to prove. If this friend is still numbered among my few remaining readers, I would like to direct this series of summation to his initial query.

First, I think I was trying to prove that there is a supreme Deity; that He had an only Begotten Son (our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ); that He left His Word with us, for ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND IS PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS (2 Tim 3:16,17).

Second, that we as a people have come under sin (Rom 5:12), and have need of a Savior to regain our lost inheritance.

Third, and probably of least importance Scripturally, but of vital importance personally, is on what grounds we can approach God to regain that lost inheritance.

I know this trend of that is contrary to much of our orthodox thinking. This is because many have drifted away from the faith once held by the apostles.

The scientific man tries to *change the world* to conform to his needs and desires. He is constantly conjuring up theories as to the origin of man and the universe. He can quickly discard the profound truths (?) of yesterday, when they are discovered to be false by today's truths.

The theologians try to *conform man* to the creed of fellowship and social equality. He tries to compress the old nature into a society that is acceptable to all, never realizing that the old nature is not conformable to spiritual truths (Rom 8). So the theologian's society continues to reflect the desires of the flesh, ever changing, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 3:7).

The Christian, knowing his position before God, is *transformed*, and so seeks to render his body a sacrifice acceptable unto God (Rom 12:1).

Now some of you may think the following to be libelous statements. But I have before me a book written by one of our foremost bishops who vows that he has no need for the atoning blood of Christ; that he will pay for his own sins (I'm surprised that he has any!); and that the virgin birth and Christ's redeeming power are just so much fable.

I have another book written by the dean of a southern college, well-known in church circles as a lecturer and preacher, who subscribes to the same brand of ideology.

I have a cousin in ecclesiastical circles who defends this position by stating that *fellowship* is more important than *Sonship*.

So of necessity, these articles that are written in conclusion, must be directed toward believers, or those that would believe. For the scientist needs no change since he thinks he can change the world. The theologian needs no change, for there has been no fall (he says).

So our admonitions and entreaties are for the

## 1900 YEARS TOO LATE!

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

In 1815 there was a terrific battle at New Orleans and the British lost about 2600 men. Later they learned that this battle was all a mistake. The war had ended 2 weeks before! Due to poor communication facilities, there was no way for them to know.

Jokingly, they say that there are people in the hills in the South who do not know yet that the Civil war is over. We hardly believe that there are any that ignorant.

But the surprising thing that we face today is the fact that Christendom is *1900 years behind the times*. Just about 1900 years ago the kingdom program was terminated for the time being and a new program instituted. God tells this plainly in His Word. Yet men have never discovered it and go right on with the kingdom program today as if nothing had ever happened.

The proclamation of the change was made in Acts 28:28. The outline of the new order is found in the prison epistles of Paul. The church has had this truth all these centuries, yet has never wakened up to the fact that they are working in vain.

The soldiers that fought at New Orleans could be excused because they did not know and had no way of knowing. We might even excuse a person of the hill section of the South today, on grounds of ignorance, for not knowing that the Civil war was over. But what excuse can be given Christendom for not knowing that God has changed His order 1900 years ago?

The church claims to have preserved the Bible for us all thru the dark ages. *How is it that they do not know its contents?*

Can it be that the god of this world has blinded their eyes so that they could not see the truth? Can it be that the flesh does not like the plan and purpose of God and so has substituted a plan and purpose of their own?

Can it be that man does not care for the righteousness of God and so has gone about establishing his own righteousness by works? Can it be that Christendom has utterly refused God's plan of salvation for today and substituted something else, but calling it a name they have found in the Scriptures?

These are questions that are hard to answer. It may be that there are several answers. But there is little use in seeking for them now. It would do us no good now to know why all this has come about. *We have the future to deal with, not the past.*

The great question that confronts us today is how we are going to go about enlightening people concerning the truth. How can we get them to see that God's way is the only acceptable way?

Those who would do the will of God must first of all know what that will is. *A good workman is one that studies well the blue prints and goes by them, not according to his own notions.* God has given us the blue prints for today. We need only to leave our own experiences, our own opinions, our traditions, and our own selfish desires, and turn to God's Word afresh for complete instructions.

This month we have several new ones on our mailing list. Welcome to the circle of readers. We want you to know that this paper, *Truth For Today*, is published monthly by Oscar M. Baker and is sent free to anybody anywhere. If you know of any who might be interested, send us a list of names and addresses.

In many countries of the world there are small groups of believers meeting mainly in homes to study the Word concerning God's plan and purpose for today. We are glad to hear about these and their activities from time to time. In turn we can encourage them by news from other centers. Let us hear from you.

Mr. Canning has sent out notices to those in arrears in Berean Expositor subscriptions. If folks are not sufficiently interested to reply, they will be taken from the mailing list.

We have a stock of 2 new booklets now. One by C. H. Welch is *Fundamentals and the Mystery*. This is an answer to the charge that right dividers have left the fundamentals. Copies 15¢. Wm. Campbell of Auckland, New Zealand has reprinted his booklet, *The Great Tribulation, Will the Church go Through it?* 30¢ each.

There are 2 new series of tapes now going out on the tape chains. Those who have tape recorders should get in on these. One is *The Being and Nature of God* and the other is *What is Man?* These addresses were given at the Chapel of the Opened Book in London, England. Since some of the singing is recorded, some may wish to purchase the little hymnals used. They are 40¢ each (words only).

We have: Companion Bibles, \$12 to \$28 each; Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, \$13.75 each; The New Greek Interlinear NT, \$8 each; The Englishman's Greek Concordance, \$8.50 each; The Englishman's Heb. and Chaldee Concordance, \$17.50 each (or these 2 concordances for \$25). Ask for list of other books.

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