

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #68

## STEPS TO A GOAL #18

AND GAVE GIFTS UNTO MEN...AND HE GAVE SOME. APOSTLES; AND SOME, PROPHETS; AND SOME, EVANGELISTS; AND SOME, PASTORS AND TEACHERS. 4:8,11.

These gifts were given by the risen Lord. They were not the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are men. The word MEN is to be supplied or understood after each occurrence of SOME.

In 1 Cor 12 we see that God SET some in that church in different positions. But here in Ephesians the Lord is administering affairs and He does not set men in different positions, but gives men as gifts to men.

There are 4 groups. The first group is foundational and is not continued. In Eph 2:20 we see FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS. Some have mistaken this to refer to those of a past dispensation. It must be remembered that these apostles and prophets were given by the ascended Christ. They are not those chosen while He was here on earth, nor are they OT prophets.

We are not going to speculate as to the identity of these apostles and prophets. They were given, have served their purpose, and have gone off the scene. Paul was the chief. We know that.

Following the apostles and prophets were evangelists, and pastors and teachers. These were to continue the work. That they too should cease is intimated in verse 13. When the work of these gifts is complete, then there is no further need for them. But who can say that it is yet complete?

The apostle and prophet could speak with authority. They could claim inspiration. They also could rule. *None* can claim such prerogatives today. The evangelist, pastor and teacher are not inspired. They merely carry on with what has already been revealed. They use the Word that has been given and as they preach and teach it, they can say, *Thus saith the Lord*. They have a sacred trust. Such a trust is committed to Timothy and it is well that we read and study that which was entrusted to him. It may give us light on what our mission for today might be.

There is some question as to whether the evangelist, pastor and teacher should feed themselves at the expense of the church. This may appear to be a foolish question in this day when it is the accepted thing for the preacher to have a dwelling furnished and a good salary to boot. But as we search the epistles which have to do with the dispensation of the mystery, we find no warrant for such procedure. We do not say that it is wrong, but on the other hand, who can say that it is right? Of course if there are those who would like to take upon themselves the burden of caring for the evangelist, pastor or teacher, then who are we to object? Each case will have to be settled on its own merits.

Some of us may find ourselves in one of these positions. We should soberly realize that they are faint reflections of our Lord Himself. With all humility of mind, and with love, let us be careful to perform the duties of our office as unto Him. Being lax in duties or taking any advantage of office for selfish reasons does not become one who is a gift.

There are many who question the profit of a study of the OT and especially the history of Israel. But hidden behind all this historical matter is a lesson, a principle, which is a type of what God is doing with all mankind from the fall in Eden until all sin and death have been put away. All Scripture is profitable.

Let us look at 3 main items in the history of Israel and later on make the application.

I. Israel had multiplied until the land was filled with them (Ex 1:7). This was all according to the promise made to Abraham. It was said that his seed should multiply till they could not be numbered. You will remember that Israel were in Egypt because there had been a famine in Canaan, and so Jacob and his family moved there, the way having been prepared by Joseph. We would naturally expect that the next step would be their removal into the promised land.

II. But instead of a removal to the land of promise, there was bondage and affliction. This had been foretold to Abraham (Gen 15:13). Their suffering in Egypt seems to be without reason if one does not know why. Here they were, their lives saved from the famine in Canaan. The famine was over. Still they were in Egypt. They multiplied and that part of the prediction was fulfilled. But a new dynasty comes in which did not know Joseph and they became the most abject slaves. These people who had been shepherds now had to work in brick and mortar and bear great burdens. No wonder they groaned under it all!

III. Finally there was deliverance. There was an exodus from Egypt. Bondage ended. But it is all in relation to the iniquity of the Amorite (Gen 15:16). When that had waxed full and was ripe, then came the exodus. This event could not be rushed or brot in ahead of time. It was not dependent on what men did or did not do to make it come to pass. It all depended on the coming to the full of the iniquity of the false seed. God does everything at the right time. How often we see such expressions as THE FULLNESS OF TIME. To the uninitiated, this can be very confusing. They do not understand. They say, *Why does not God do this?* or *Why does not God do that?* Even Moses was going to try to take things in his own hands and deliver Israel 40 years too soon. It may be that if we understand these dealings with Israel, we may be able to comprehend what God is doing today and why He waits to finish the work begun on Calvary.

*Why does He not kill the Devil right now and have it over?* That is what some ask. *Why does He not put an end to all this war and misery?* Others may ask that. Israel could well have said in like manner, *Why does God allow us to suffer so?*

There is a great principle at work which involves all the families of God. This principle is foreshadowed by God's dealings with His chosen people, Israel. We can do well to study their history and see the types and parallels that concern us today. FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER UNTIL NOW. God has told us why there is a delay. But we need to study.

## OUTLINE STUDIES IN ROMANS #10

## FLESH AND BLOOD AND THE KINGDOM

This section is Ro 11:17-36.

To appreciate the prior position of the Jew dispensationally, look back to Ro 9:3,4.

The fatness of the olive tree refers to the blessings of Israel. The fact that they are the root makes them first.

But there is a breaking off of branches. Note this in Ac 13:46; 18:5,6. Finally the tree is cut down as in the parable.

The grafting in of the Gentiles is contrary to the natural way of doing. Usually we graft the choice branch on to the wild root. But here it is done to provoke the tree to bear fruit, not fruit on the graft.

Gentiles are reminded that the natural limbs can be grafted in again and Israel restored.

CUT OFF does not refer to salvation. It is the place of dispensational privilege and blessing. Losing the blessings is not losing salvation. It is safe and secure (chapter 8).

In Romans the blindness is only for a season. There is no thot of it becoming complete. That is a later revelation. It does become complete at the end of Acts. Jerusalem destroyed at last.

All Israel is to be saved some day. But we must look at 9:6 to see who Israel may be. Not every descendent of Abraham by any means. The Gentiles, as such, do not look for His coming.

Note that Israel became enemies of God for Gentiles' sake. But they are beloved of God for the fathers' sake. This is a puzzle to many.

Promises in connection with the new covenant are all unconditional. The reason for this is that the new covenant is all of grace. No works can enter in. The new covenant is with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer 31).

There is a great deal of prophecy concerning Israel restored. Read Isa 60:5,11,10,14,16,20,21; 61:5,6,9; 62:11,12. Gentiles have the upper hand now. Not so then. It will be reversed.

In the meantime God is working out another purpose, while Israel, scattered among the nations, is getting ready to repent and be restored. The time may be short.

Be careful with the word ALL in verse 32. It refers back to ALL ISRAEL in verse 26. This is not a case for universal reconciliation.

Verse 33 begins a great doxology. Altho the nation is going down and the Gentile is taking her place in many ways, the apostle is looking into the future and the great restoration. Of course that will be a time of blessing to the Gentiles too. For Israel will be a priestly nation and will tell the Gentiles the great news of salvation for those days.

There are 3 great questions here; 1, Who can tell what God is thinking? 2, Who can instruct God and tell Him how to run His universe? 3, Who can give anything to God and make Him rich, or expect anything back from God as an exchange or recompense? God's ways are past finding out.

In verse 36 notice the 3 prepositions, OF, THROUGH, and TO. These need further study. Here ALL THINGS refers to what has been mentioned in the context. You may have to read this whole section over again to find what that is.

--TAPE SA10

Angels came and proclaimed, PEACE ON EARTH, but men murdered the Prince of Peace. There can be no peace till the Prince comes again. Men may work for it and pray for it, but there is no peace.

Men, under the tutelage of Satan will be enabled to set up a counterfeit kingdom with a peace enforced under threat of war. But there can be no lasting peace.

Men may work and men may pray that God's will be done on earth. But they never yet have learned that the carnal mind, i.e., the flesh, IS NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAW OF GOD. NEITHER INDEED CAN BE (Ro 8:7). How vain are the plans of men when they think that a kingdom of God can be set up this side of resurrection!

The same thot concerning the flesh is set forth in ICo 15:50, FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The next verse makes it plain that all men must be changed before they have part in the kingdom of God. As long as men have the old nature, the flesh, in them, they cannot be subjects of the kingdom of God. There is only one way that this flesh can be shed, and that is either thru resurrection or the change that accompanies the resurrection. (We do not speak of the church of the dispensation of the mystery. Its abode, rulership, and kingdom are not of or on this earth).

There has been much speculation as to what would have happened if Israel had accepted the Lord as their Messiah and King when He was on earth. There is no guessing about it. He made it plain that His kingdom was not of this world (kosmos, world order, Jo 18:36). Yet we have those who would work to usher in such a kingdom before the coming of the Lord and the Millennial kingdom! There can be no kingdom of heaven or of God in the present world order.

One night a leader of the Jews, who had become a believer, came to the Lord to ask certain questions. He did not get to ask them. The Lord knew what he had in mind. The answer was given very plainly and to the point. It was to the effect that neither Israel as a nation nor Nicodemus as a man had any hope of seeing or entering the kingdom of God this side of resurrection. The solemn words, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN, settled the question once and for all. Our Lord Himself was born again (Firstborn from the dead, Col 1:18). If He had to be resurrected before entering into His kingdom, can the servant be greater than the Master? Can men expect to become so good in the flesh that they can bypass the resurrection or the change?

Nicodemus must have known concerning this rebirth or resurrection (Isa 66:8) and no doubt went home a rather disappointed man in some ways. On the other hand this great truth must have strengthened his faith, and he, along with Joseph, carefully and lovingly prepared their Lord for His burial.

In spite of the yearnings of politicians, the dreams of reformers, and the plans of the theologians, there will be no kingdom of heaven on this earth until the King comes, changes the subjects, and sets it up personally.

## THE GLORY OF CHRIST

## BEGINNER'S CORNER #34

In Col 1:13 we read the phrase, HIS DEAR SON. Who is this one called by such a simple yet beautiful title? The verses that follow (14-20) answer this question.

1. *He is the Redeemer.* IN WHOM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD. But the Greek actually says, IN WHOM WE HAVE THE COMPLETE REDEMPTION. Notice the words THE and COMPLETE. There is no other redemption. YE WERE NOT REDEEMED WITH...SILVER AND GOLD...BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST (1 Pet 1:18,19). And it is a completeness which no later bondage should follow.

2. *He is the Image.* WHO IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. Why is idolatry so terrible? Because God has allowed only one image of Himself, namely Christ. HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER (John 14:9). The word IMAGE is eikon. It means more than just resemblance; it means a derived likeness. Christ was what He was because He was God.

3. *He is the Creator.* FOR BY HIM WERE THE ALL THINGS CREATED. It is not just ALL THINGS, but THE ALL THINGS. This would include the church which is His body. He builds it. Note Eph 2:14,15; FOR HE IS OUR PEACE, WHO HAS MADE US BOTH ONE, AND HAS BROKEN DOWN THE DIVIDING WALL OF HOSTILITY, BY ABOLISHING IN HIS FLESH THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES, THAT HE MIGHT CREATE IN HIMSELF ONE NEW MAN IN PLACE OF THE TWO...(RSV).

4. *He is the Consistory.* BY HIM ALL THINGS CONSIST, OR IN HIM THE ALL THINGS HOLD TOGETHER. Let us apply this, not only to creation, the earth, the sun, the stars, etc., but to the redeemed who make up His body. What holds them together? He does. The formal and highly organized churches of Christendom have their solemn tribunals or courts called *consistories*. But the church which is His body has one *consistory*, CHRIST. In Him we STAND TOGETHER OR STAND JOINTLY which is the basic sense of the Greek word here.

5. *He is the Head.* AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY. THE CHURCH. The HE is very emphatic. We would exalt Him above all would-be heads, human or angelic.

6. *He is our Settled Abode.* FOR IT PLEASSED THE FATHER THAT IN HIM SHOULD ALL FULNESS DWELL. But the Greek has THE FULNESS. We are THE FULNESS. Read Eph 1:22,23. We shall fill the vacant place in heaven. The word DWELL means to settle down and be at home. So we who shall be THE FULNESS, when joined to Him in heaven, have found in Him not just a precious hiding place, but a precious dwelling place, a settled abode. Therein we have been sealed (Eph 1:13).

7. *He is our Peace.* AND, HAVING MADE PEACE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS, BY HIM TO RECONCILE ALL THINGS UNTO HIMSELF. The meaning of RECONCILE in this verse is a complete and unbreakable re-connection. ALL THINGS is again THE ALL THINGS, THE THINGS UPON THE EARTH OR THE THINGS IN THE HEAVENS. But what about the wicked? They will have been destroyed. Phil 3:19 says, WHOSE END IS DESTRUCTION.

Perhaps the greatest error that has crept into Christian thinking today has been the acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as separate books. The fact that present day theology has divided the past and the present at the book of Matthew, and people themselves have regarded the NT as truth for today, has brot a serious error into Bible interpretation that seems to be impossible to eradicate.

It is like saying American freedom was gained in 1620 when the first Pilgrim landed at Plymouth Rock, rather than in the year 1776 when America shook off the English rule.

Here was a period of 156 years when the people were in a new country but still under the bondage of the rule of England. This is exactly the same situation we have in the Bible. All, it seems, with few exceptions, regard the NT as our source of doctrine for today, trying to make its teachings and admonitions fit the dispensation of today, thereby reaping confusion. Just as the USA did not become a free nation in the year 1620, neither did the Christian of today become free with the opening pages of Matthew. It was not until he was granted freedom in the fulness of time that he became so. Up until then he was as much under the yoke of bondage to the ordinances of the OT as the Pilgrim was to the rule of England.

I will admit that the Pilgrim enjoyed a freedom in this country that his fellow citizen in England did not. I will also admit that certain believers during part of the NT enjoyed certain privileges that others did not. Acts 15:10,29, but this does not set aside the law. Just as the promise to Abraham, which was 430 years before, could not be set aside by the law, neither could the promise to Christ before age times be set aside by either (Ga 3:17).

So as the Christian sojourned in bondage some 65 years after the birth of Christ, and as the Pilgrim sojourned in the land of America for 156, so also were both granted their freedom in due time. The American colonist in 1776 and the Christian only when he became A NEW MAN. Eph 2:15, CHRIST HAVING ABOLISHED IN HIS FLESH THE ENMITY, EVEN THE LAW OF COMMANDMENTS...FOR TO MAKE IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN. Notice here it is in Him, not thru Abraham, or Moses, or the law. In Christ is made the new man.

Now some have recognized the deficiencies of this division between the OT and the NT and have set their boundaries further along in the early Christian history. Others have gone a little further and recognized the dispensation of the mystery as set forth by Paul. This is not easy to comprehend. Tradition, teaching, social thinking, and wrong division all tend to lead one away from the Christian position of today. The truth has been lost.

If we would establish correctly the frontier of where truth for today begins, there are two facts to remember. First, up to the end of Acts the believer was blest thru Abraham (Ga 3:29). Second, after Acts the believer is blest in Christ. This we must receive and believe.

## DUST AND DEITY

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

Deity created dust. But dust has never been quite able to comprehend Deity.

Dust gets so puffed up at times that he tries to instruct Deity. Dust is so ignorant that he does not know what an offense this is to Deity.

Dust is a creature of material, space, and time. These 3 are essential for the universe as dust knows it. Deity can exist without or outside the universe. Deity (Spirit) and matter (dust) have nothing in common. That is why dust cannot comprehend Deity.

The earth cannot contain Deity. Neither can the heaven of heavens. Deity knows nothing of time. Neither is space any problem to Deity.

Dust knows that light and electricity can travel circa 183,000 miles per second. But all this is in the realm of the knowledge of dust. Dust knows nothing faster (unless it be rumor). Deity (Spirit) can be here, there, and everywhere at the same time and is in no way hindered or bounded by such terms.

For example, in Ge 18 & 19, Deity (Jehovah) appeared unto Abraham in the form of 3 men. Two of these appeared later to Lot. They were Deity. One remained with Abraham. He was Deity. And while Deity was on earth in the form of 3 men, Deity rained fire from Deity in heaven. How can mere dust understand such doings?

Deity stretched out the firmament and chose to dwell under it in order to work out His plan of redemption for the ages. When that work is finished, the firmament will be folded up and put away. Yet in creation that firmament was not pronounced good. Does dust understand?

Deity chose to abide with His people in the wilderness in a tent. His presence was signified by the Shekinah glory. But at the same instant Deity was also present in the outermost reaches of His universe and beyond. Dost thou, O dust, understand?

Deity came to the earth in the form of dust in order to reveal Himself to dust. But dust murdered the form of Deity and would have nothing to do with Him. Dust was made in the image of Deity, but lost it. It is the purpose of Deity, when dust so wills, that dust be transformed and conformed to the image of Deity.

Deity that once came to earth will again come to earth in visible form and rule over the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron and they will finally rebel and try to throw off His rule. There will be a great destruction of dust. Deity will eventually rule over dust.

Dust rebels even today and spreads all kinds of lies about Deity. Dust ever tries to belittle the nature and being of Deity. *Dust cannot understand how Deity could rule over a kingdom here on earth and at the same time be ruling over another kingdom somewhere else in the universe.* So dust judges that it would be impossible, and in so judging he denies the deity of Deity Who came in the form of dust in order that all dust might not perish.

It is high time for dust to dust off the Word and do some serious study as to the nature and being of Deity. Only in the Word is it now made known. With the help of Deity, dust can learn.

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*THANK* for all your letters and the help you have sent us. So far we have managed to get the paper out on time each month and pay the bills.

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