

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #73

STEPS TO A GOAL #23

BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH... 4:15.

This is in contrast to THEY LIE IN WAIT TO DECEIVE in the verse before. Contrasts are good in teaching. Background can be made to set forth what is to be stressed.

There is a Satanic system. He has things well organized. He follows a three-fold method of attack in his deception. (1) He casts doubt on the Word of God, (2) He inserts his lie, and (3) he appeals to pride, the flesh (See Ge 3:1-5).

We are to not be trustful of all things as children are. The winds of false doctrine always blow toward the rocks of destruction. The sleight of men and their craftiness is energized by the power of Satan. It is a powerful combine. They lie in wait. They take simple minded people unawares as by ambush. They lie in wait that they might get folks to believe the lie.

But we are to speak truth. This is not exactly the meaning of this passage. There is no word for *speak*. Rotherham puts it, BUT PURSUING TRUTH... The phrase IN LOVE really belongs to the following clause (See Rotherham and Moffatt). C. H. Welch suggests a new word, *truthing*, here. Probably that is about the best we can do. The A. V. margin suggests *being sincere*.

It is hard to place the proper emphasis on this exhortation in the English. We are to remember the lie and over against that, we are to show forth truth in every act, motion and motive. This is far deeper than following the letter of the law. It is more than trying to keep from being caught in wrong-doing. It has to do with the innermost being and its truthfulness in every aspect of life. It is being true to one's self and to God.

Real truth is not vindictive. It does not judge harshly. It does not seek to destroy. But it does make for tenderness of character. The truthful man is conscientious. His truth offends only those who oppose themselves.

Most folks will agree that this is a pretty stiff order. Being that we still live in the flesh, there are times when we are tempted to dissimulate for a good cause. We are tempted to exaggerate a bit to emphasize the truth. So with a good motive in mind we are deceived and speak a lie in defense of the truth. But truth cannot be defended with a lie. We only defile the truth and make ourselves liars by so doing. Let us be careful!

So often a half-truth is more dangerous than a whole lie. Abraham got into trouble with half-truths. You may think of others who did likewise. This includes the ambiguous statements we are tempted to make at times to avoid having to tell the truth.

There is a sort of insincerity in many lives. People put on an act. It is a superficial method of living to make an impression on others. This can become such a habit that a person cannot act natural. In so-called society, this is the style. It has been the ruin of multitudes.

The real name for this is hypocrisy. It was an affliction which overtook the Pharisees. It is common among some church circles today. It is that sanctimonious air some put on.

We must go back a little in Israel's history for another lesson we must not overlook. It is the walk by faith, not by sight.

Heb 11:29 tells us that they passed thru the Red Sea by faith. Now just stop for a moment and think how it could be that they passed thru by faith. Is that the description?

Let us go back to the account in Ex 14. After leaving Egypt that memorable nite, the children of Israel discovered that the Egyptians were following them with a mighty army. They had gotten to the shore of the sea. On one side was a mountain, on the other the Egyptian army, back of them a wilderness, and the Red Sea in front. They were trapped!

They were also scared. They began to upbraid Moses because he had led them out into this wild place to die. They began to wish that they were slaves again in Egypt.

Moses called to them and told them to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. He told them that they would never see these Egyptians again. The people listened.

But while they stood still and listened to Moses, the sea did not open up. This was not to be a walk by sight. Early in their experience they learned what it meant to walk by faith.

Then Moses gave the order to march forward. But the sea was there. Nevertheless they were told to go forward. They did. They walked right into the water...no, not quite, for when the next step would have taken them into it, the water was not there. It had divided.

This is what is meant by walking by faith. This is how they crossed the Red Sea by faith.

What Israel did by faith, the Egyptians essayed to do by sight. God allowed them to go only so far and then destruction came. Let us be careful that we do not try to walk by sight rather than by faith. The results can be bad.

So Israel were saved. But we soon see that there were 2 aspects to this salvation. First, they were delivered from the hand of the enemy. Second, they were avenged in that not one of the enemy remained.

Did you know that *Redeemer* and *Avenger* are the same word in the Hebrew? Well, they are, and what a lot that can mean to us. Just that one fact makes untenable the theory that all mankind, as well as our enemy Satan, will be reconciled and saved some day. In our redemption is included the complete destruction of the devil, Satan, that old serpent. When Noah and his family were saved, their salvation included the destruction of the false seed. So it was with Israel at the Red Sea; their redemption also included the destruction of their enemies. This is a lesson for us.

But the deliverance from their enemies and the destruction of their enemies was not all there was to their salvation. The God that led them out (exodus), also was able to lead them into an acceptance (eisodos) by the atonement. Again, this is for our learning. There is a salvation from, and a salvation to. Let us not emphasize the former to the neglect of the latter. We might miss something important.

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER (CONT.)

Paul had received the good news of their abounding in works of faith and love. From that day he did not cease to pray on their behalf. Such good tidings had made him very happy.

Then Paul sets forth an outline and the purport of his petitions in their behalf. First he prays that they will grow more and more in knowledge till they attain to the perfect knowledge of God's will. He prays that they will be endowed with all wisdom so that they may be able to apprehend His verities; that they may have intelligence so as to be able to follow His processes. And above all, that they may live in the mind of the spirit, the new nature.

The purpose, the end of all this is, that knowledge may be manifested in practice. He wants their conduct in life to be worthy of their profession in the Lord. In so doing they may win the gracious favor of God their King.

He reminds them that he prays that they may also grow as they bear this fruit, even as a tree grows, being watered and refreshed by this knowledge as by the dew of heaven. In such manner they will be strengthened in all strength, according to that power which centers in and spreads from His glorious manifestation of Himself. Also they will be nerved unto all endurance under affliction; all long-suffering under provocation, not only without complaint, but even with joy.

This is all building up to another goal, that is, as a crown of it all, they will so rejoice that they will pour forth thanksgiving to the Father. Why? Because the Father had prepared and fitted them all, including Paul himself, to take possession of a portion which His goodness had allotted to them in the holiest of all, even in heaven itself in the presence of the Shekinah glory. No higher calling, no greater blessings had ever been given to any of the sons of men.

Paul reminds himself and his hearers that they had been rescued by a strong arm from the lawless tyranny of darkness (even as Israel from the darkness of Egypt), removing them from the land of their bondage. Now they have been settled as free citizens in a new and glorious home. Here His Son, the offspring and representative of His love, is King. This is the Son who had paid their ransom and thus procured their redemption from captivity. This, then, was their redemption. They could be assured that it was the remission of their sins.

Paul then sets forth the astounding fact that Christ, the Son, is the perfect image, the visible representation, of the unseen God. (It was after this image that Adam was patterned). He is the Firstborn (that is, the absolute Heir) of the Father. He stands far above all creatures, for He is the Creator. That makes Him Lord of the Universe. In Him and thru Him the whole Kosmos was created. This includes all that is in the heavens and on the earth, whether they be visible or invisible, whether they can be seen with the outward eye or are only known by the inward perception. His supremacy is absolute and universal. Not all His creatures realize that yet.

HOW TO APPROACH THE REVELATION

There is not much doubt about this being the last book of the Bible to be written. It was written at a time when Israel was set aside and her hope postponed to a future time. This future day, the day of the Lord, is the setting for the events of this book.

When the dispensation of the mystery has run its course, and its purpose and program completed, then again will be taken up the weeks of the prophecy of Da 9. This drops us right into, not Jerusalem and Palestine, but into Asia with Israel in exile.

In Asia, Israel is spoken to thru 7 representative churches or synagogues. This cannot be about the present time, for now we have only one body or church.

There are some who say they have identified up to 285 quotes or references to OT prophecies. It is hard to determine the number, but they are plentiful. The events have nothing to do with the present or the past, but to the future only, the day of the Lord.

Out of these 7 churches in Asia we find at least 7 groups mentioned and identified;

1. Those who endure to the end (tribulation).
2. Those who are beheaded and have part in the first resurrection.
3. Those (the woman) who flee to the wilderness.
4. The man-child who is caught up.
5. The 144,000 witnesses from the 12 tribes.
6. The 2 witnesses.
7. The rest of the dead who miss the kingdom but come up for judgment for rewards after it is over.

We find there the torment and final destruction of Satan as foretold.

We see there 2 cities, Babylon and Jerusalem.

We see there 2 women, Israel and Babylon.

The beast and false prophet appear.

There are 2 kingdoms, the false and the true.

There is mention of a period in which day and night will go on. This is the duration of the punishment and destruction of Satan. But it is also the duration of the post-millennial kingdom where Christ will reign with his enemies all put down.

The new Jerusalem, the place prepared for the 12 apostles, comes down from heaven. The names of the 12 are in the foundations.

The advent of Christ with all His holy angels (saints) is described more in detail than in either 1Co 15 or 1Th 4.

The events are not in chronological order. We cannot arrange them in order in all places.

While a missionary on the Isle of Patmos, John was caught up in spirit to this day of the Lord and given a glimpse of the things that are to come in relation to Israel and God's covenant with them. M't 24 and 25 should be studied in connection with it.

There are 14 scenes; 7 in heaven, and 7 on earth. They alternate in pairs.

This book relates the final conflict of the 2 seeds as foretold in Ge 3. It ends with a new heaven and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness.

BOUNTIES

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #2

BOUNTY is a familiar term, especially in the West. It is well within the memory of this writer to hear of men collecting bounties for the destruction of certain animals. Time and progress, however, change the country we live in. What, for example, was once the frightening cry of the coyote has been transformed by the magic of memory to a pleasant reminiscence.

But the day of bounties is not done. God has His, and their nature is determined by the economy of God under which we live.

BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HATH BLESSED US IN CHRIST WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES (Eph 1:3). The word translated BLESSING here is the same word that is translated BOUNTY in 2Co 9:5 (AV). There Paul mentions the bounty, or gift, that the Corinthians had promised for the believers of Judea.

We note in Eph 1:3 that our bounties are spiritual and also that they are in the heavenly places. It is rather difficult to define such bounties. But one especially comes to mind: citizenship in heaven. BUT OUR COMMONWEALTH IS IN HEAVEN, AND FROM IT (or by virtue of such) WE AWAIT A SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (Ph'p 3:20).

Because of this, a day is coming when we shall be with our Lord, never to be separated from Him. In Col 1:12 we read about GIVING THANKS TO THE FATHER, WHO HAS QUALIFIED US TO SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT. Another translation is, THE INHERITANCE OF THE HOLY PLACE IN LIGHT. So also in Eph 2:19 are we FELLOW CITIZENS OF THE SAINTS, or, JOINT-CITIZENS OF THE HOLY PLACE.

We note in Ga 3:14 the expression, BLESSING (bounty) of ABRAHAM. But in Ephesians we are not talking about bounties associated with Abraham. The bounties of Ephesians come by virtue of the fact that the believer has been raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is a difference between Galatians, written before Acts 28, and Ephesians, written afterwards when Israel has been set aside. Someday, when Israel has been restored, the bounties of Abraham will flow out to all nations.

But there is something else to be said about this word BOUNTY or BLESSING. The Greek word is eulogia and, literally, it means *good speaking*. Note our word *eulogy*, a commendation or praise of someone. The verb is eulogeo. It means to bless or speak well of.

So our Lord said, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ABUSE YOU (Lu 6:28). Paul wrote, BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU; BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE THEM. WHEN REVILED, WE BLESS, WHEN PERSECUTED, WE ENDURE. (Ro 12:14; 1Co 4:12).

We are well aware that there are those who are sadly derelict in their own Bible study. These deem it their duty to deride those who rightly divide the Word as God has commanded. But this is the divine retaliation: *Blessing-speaking well of--and prayer*. There must be none other.

The aim of this article will not be to refute all the theories rampant in the world today concerning the state of the dead. For if we were to do so we would never get to the subject at hand, but spend months in running down false theories.

These range anywhere from--a purgatory from whence a man's soul is ransomed by silver and gold to those who go to the other extreme and say we immediately go to heaven when we die, giving 2Co 5:8 as their proof, ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

Therefore we will stick to Scripture and see what God has to say about the state of man. What is the standing of man before God? What does the Bible have to say about death? What is the resurrection? Does man really die?

It is a comforting thot to believe that man never dies, but is changed in the twinkling of an eye, or to leave this body to be present with the Lord; or to say that man is immortal. In fact one will find with a little searching that the doctrines of man are usually very acceptable. For instance; tax the rich, old age security, world peace, immortality, etc. But cleverly hidden in all these great methods of salvation are elements that not only cause them to fail in their supposed intent, but eventually cost those who subscribe to them two-fold loss.

I am sure that most of you are familiar with Joh 3:16, FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE. The word PERISH in this verse is the Greek word *apollumi*, meaning to die. There is no other meaning implied here and none can be given in spite of multitudes of wishful thinkers. In M'r 2:22 we have the same word translated *marred* when used to describe the old bottles of wine. Here we see again the true meaning is *to destroy*, for the bottles will burst.

Some may cry that I am out of step with civilization. That may be so, but not with God. For in Ge 2:17 we read, BUT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, THOU SHALT NOT EAT OF IT; FOR IN THE DAY THAT THOU EATEST THEREOF THOU SHALT SURELY DIE. FOR OUT OF IT (ground) WAST THOU TAKEN; FOR DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALL THOU RETURN (Ge 3:19).

Do either of these passages hint of immortality or a living state of the dead? However, in verse 4 of the same chapter we do have a hint, AND THE SERPENT SAID UNTO THE WOMAN, YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE. Here is the one who advocates immortality. Here is the one who preaches an undying soul. But hear what Christ has to say about him,--FOR HE IS A LIAR, AND THE FATHER OF IT (Joh 8:44).

God put Adam under condemnation,--YE SHALL SURELY DIE (Ge 2:17). He also asks, WHY SHOULD IT BE THOUGHT A THING INCREDIBLE WITH YOU, THAT GOD SHOULD RAISE THE DEAD (Ac 26:8)?

Christ said, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE (Joh 11:25).

No Scripture implies a living death--*Just the Quick and the Dead*. ..DENTON C. ABBEY

SILENTLY, SECRETLY, MYSTERIOUSLY

THE EDITOR'S DESK

No trumpets, no shouts, marked the beginning of the dispensation of the mystery. Just the simple statement, THE SALVATION OF GOD IS SENT UNTO THE GENTILES.

Because they cannot point back to some historical landmark, many are inclined to doubt these words in the Word. They cannot believe that such an important event could just happen without some eruption in nature or a great battle of world forces or some such landmark to point out a great change.

There is no evidence that the end of the dispensation of the mystery will be any more spectacular than its beginning. It is likely that it will never make the headlines in the papers.

It has been going on so secretly and silently during all these centuries since Paul spoke those words in Rome, that the great bulk of Christendom does not know anything about it. It is still a secret, made known only to such as are saints and faithful. It is not known by a study of the Bible as a book among other books. No amount of worldly learning or degrees can search out the secret. One must receive the gift of the spirit of wisdom and knowledge. The understanding must be enlightened.

There are those who talk about the mystery, but that is no guarantee that they know it. Many know that there was a dispensational boundary at the end of Acts, but know nothing of what lies beyond. This is especially true of some sects which have agreed with the teaching that there is a change of dispensation so that they might catch some unawares. But they are unable to define the mystery. You get absolutely no light on the subject from their writings. This is a good thing to keep in mind when examining anything new.

The term *mystery*, at the time Paul was writing his epistles, was a word used among the heathen. It was the degrees or steps by which they were gradually led into the secrets of the idol worship. A mystery then was something revealed to an initiate.

We do not need to leave that meaning very far today. The mystery is something revealed to the initiate in the things of God. But very few seek to know. Few go on unto any perfection at all. Mere Christian professors then cannot be expected to know the mystery.

There is little likelihood of anyone having part in or reaping benefits from something he does not know about. He cannot receive anything by faith till he has heard about it. That is where many are deceived. They try to make the mystery a part of the kingdom. They think they can be meek and inherit the earth and get heaven too. So they mix up the dispensations and say that the dispensation of the mystery will end with a shout, the voice of an archangel, and a trumpeting. They do not know the mystery.

Our mission today is to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery. But we are very limited in that mission. Many do not wish to see. Like Demas, they love the world. Many are entangled in religion so deeply that they cannot escape. But we press on.

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