

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #79

STEPS TO A GOAL #29

WALK NOT AS GENTILES WALK...WHO BEING PAST FEELING HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES OVER TO LASCIVIOUSNESS, TO WORK ALL UNCLEANNESS WITH GREEDINESS. 4:17,19.

It was not so long after the fall of Adam that God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thots of his heart was only evil continually. The earth was filled with violence and it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I WILL DESTROY MAN WHOM I HAVE CREATED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH. These people were Gentiles. Israel was not yet here.

Some time after the flood, God visited the earth. The people had not obeyed Him, but had builded them a city and a tower so that they might make their name great in the earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. He confused their language and scattered them abroad. He also chose a man from Ur of the Chaldees to be the head of a nation which would be a blessing to the other nations, all 70 of them.

The reason that these nations were set aside and another nation chosen was that they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful. Then followed these steps in rapid succession; they became vain in their imagination, their foolish heart was darkened, while professing themselves to be wise they became fools, they became idolaters and worshipped the lowest and vilest things instead of the Creator. So their Creator gave them up to uncleanness; He gave them up to vile affections; He gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

From that time till the time of the apostle Paul these Gentiles were carried away unto these dumb idols, even as they were led by the fashion of the day. They walked in the vanity of their mind. They had their understanding darkened. They were alienated from the life of God. They were ignorant (fools). Their hearts were blinded. They had come to the place that they were without feeling. They had given themselves over to lasciviousness, every imagination of their heart being evil. They worked all uncleanness with greediness.

In all these things, we see the work and walk of the flesh. Satan is not mentioned. The flesh is bad enough of itself. But when Satan does finally take over this flesh and energise it, then will be a real time of trouble such as this old earth has never seen. But that is anticipating.

The saint is not to walk as these Gentiles walk and have walked in the past. That is the central thot of this section. Do saints ever walk that way? That is a question that some may ask. Sorry to say, there are some who mind earthly things, who do not put their affection on things above. They worship the belly-god, boast in their shame, and become enemies of the cross. Mark these and beware that you do not do the same. That is what the apostle has said. Let us take heed.

The five unconditional covenants can be set out in order thus;

1. The promise of eternal life in Christ, made before the ages began (Eph 3:6; 2Ti 1:1; Tit 1:2).
2. Promise of the Redeemer (Ge 3:15).
3. Covenant made with Abraham (Ge 12-22).
 - a. I will make of thee a great nation.
 - b. I will bless thee.
 - c. And make thy name great.
 - d. Thou shalt be a blessing.
 - e. I will bless them that bless thee.
 - b. And curse him that curseth thee.
 - a. In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.
4. Covenant made with David (2Sa 7).
5. The New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34).

Many do not realize that there is a grander truth than that of all the nations being blest thru Abraham. That is a truth limited to the ministry of a priestly nation. It is a truth limited to a people who will live on the earth after resurrection. But not all believers will have the earth as their future home. There are some who are exhorted to put their affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

But this program for the heavenlies was not put into operation until Israel had failed and passed from the scene as a nation. It was not revealed until the time came that the earth purpose connected with Israel was interrupted.

In the fulness of time God made it known that He had a plan and purpose for the heavenlies as well as one for the earth. His Son will not only have a kingdom of heaven on the earth, but also a vast domain over principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

The kingdom of heaven, which is the theme of Matthew's gospel, is shown expanding and filling the whole earth in Daniel. But when His kingdom is further expanded to include the whole universe, then it is called the kingdom of His Dear Son. There are some who will overcome and reign with Him on the earth. There are some who will overcome and reign with Him in the heavens. Man was made not only to have dominion over the earth, but also (in Christ) to have dominion over all that was made.

In right division, it is necessary to watch the position of the Gentile. Till Abraham all were Gentiles. No Jews then. Then thru Israel the nations were to be blest. But for the most part Israel failed. In the latter half of Acts, Gentiles partook of Israel's blessings. After Acts, there was no Israel and Gentiles were blest, not thru Abraham, but thru Christ. That is why that here for the first time the first unconditional promise was made known to man. Satan had not known it. Man had not suspected it. The failure of Israel at the end of Acts did not surprise God. He had a plan in waiting for just such a time.

We must keep in mind that when we study Israel, we are studying a pattern of God's larger dealings with all peoples and all the universe. That is why that we cannot neglect a study of the OT. It is profitable.

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER (CONT.)

Paul tells the Colossian saints that many lost their hold of the Head because they have been clinging to these lower intelligences; the worship of angels, following philosophy, and even worshipping Christ as a heavenly being rather than the Creator. They had severed their connection with Him on whom the whole body depends, from whom it gets its vitality, and to whom it owes its unity. From Him it gets its nourishment, being held together by the various joints and bands, so that it grows with a growth which comes from God Himself.

Then the apostle reminds them that they had died with Christ. For them all mundane relations had ceased. They had attained a certain spiritual manhood. Then he asks them why they have a tendency to go back to the rudimentary discipline of childhood. He wonders why that they who are citizens of heaven itself would be so prone to bow their necks afresh to the tyranny of material ordinances. It seems that they had forgotten their heavenly citizenship and lived as tho living in the world.

Of course that leads to the old story again. They have the same round of hard, meaningless, vexatious prohibitions. It is just a religion of handle not, taste not, touch not. Mature citizens of heaven have no need for such childish things. How foolish they are! All these rules about meats and drink and the like are earthly and perishable. They are wholly trivial and unimportant. Today they are used and tomorrow there is an end of them.

Such rules had drawn down the denunciations of the prophets of old. Why should they abandon God's Word for precepts of men? These precepts are only from human authority. They are put out by human teachers.

All this religious exercise was a great show of wisdom, it is true. But only a human wisdom which is foolishness in the sight of God. Why have a parade of religious devotion? Why have an affectation of humility? Do not the heathen do the same?

There is a stern ascetic rigor which ill-treats the body. But all this, not only does nothing to help check the indulgence of the flesh, but even aids and abets it. Human holiness, if it can be so-called, can never be acceptable. The old man cannot be improved.

Now if these things be so, Paul says, and you have been raised with Christ and translated into the holiest of all, what should follow? You should realize that there has been a change. You should center all your aims and thots in heaven, where Christ sits exalted on the right hand of the Father. All your thots should abide in heaven not on the earth. There is no more a looking for an earthly kingdom. There is no more a hope of Christ coming to rule on the earth. Our calling is higher than that. You must have nothing to do with such mundane things. You died, once for all to the world. You are living another, a new life. That life is hidden now, hidden with Christ in God. There is no outward glory now as men count glory, it is true, but some day there will be a manifestation.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

In this day in which we now live, we do not know Christ after the flesh. His name, Jesus, was in connection with His own earthly people, Israel. They knew Him to be a Jew from Nazareth. Some knew Him to be the King of Israel. So they knew Him after the flesh.

The time when Israel had an advantage after the flesh is past. They cannot know Him after the flesh, for He is no longer offered as the Messiah or King of the Jews. During His life here on earth that offer was good. Even during Acts the same thing was re-offered. But now that has ended. There can be a historical knowledge of Him after the flesh. But that is as far as it goes.

It is a shame today that so many who profess to be Christians know Him only historically after the flesh. They use the name Jesus in a familiar fashion. They teach it to the children. They learn about the *Jesus Way*, but that does not mean very much. It is purely a set of ethics with the name of Jesus attached.

The Lord Jesus Christ is more than a historical person who lived and died in the land of Palestine many centuries ago. He lives!

Furthermore He has spoken to us from heaven. It was a blessed thing that He should walk and talk with His disciples and others when here on the earth, but to us in these days, He has also a message. It is to be found in the epistles written after the account of the acts of the apostles.

We cannot know Him if we will not listen to what He has to say to us. We cannot know Him if we do not know what relationship we may have with Him. We cannot know Him if we are rebellious and refuse to hear and do what He says.

In Him we have every spiritual blessing. In Him we have redemption thru His blood. In Him we have access to the Father. In Him we have an inheritance in the holy of holies. In Him we are seated at the right hand of the Father.

With Him in us, we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. With Him in us, we are to be humble. With Him in us, we can do all things He would have us do. With Him in us, we can run for the prize and strive for the crown.

We do Him honor by calling Him, LORD. We find our place of service in the body of which He is the Head. We are identified with Him (by the one baptism) in a quickening, being raised, and seated at the right hand of the Father far above all principality and power in the heavenlies. Only one thing we lack yet. That is the glory.

He lives! He walks by our side. He is ever present to help and to guide. If we do not feel this and realize it, it is our own fault. If we are not on speaking terms with Him, we only are to blame. If we let the affairs of the world into our lives so that we cannot hear Him, we will suffer the loss. If we deny Him our time and money, yes, even our whole life, He will deny us the crown. We should be glad to be servants. But we are sons. Our walk as sons is the measure of our knowledge of Him.

CAN WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #8

When Job was in distress and his 3 friends (?) sought to comfort him, they resorted to 3 philosophies which plague the Christian world yet today and darken counsel with words. God did not approve of those things then; neither does He approve of them now. They tend to obscure the truth. All too often they are a poor substitute for truth.

These three philosophies were;

1. Human experience.
2. Human tradition.
3. Human merit.

Regardless of what God may have said, there are great numbers of folks who will cling to some poor experience. Many today are living in the light of some experience they may have had some 40 years ago. It has robbed them of a wonderful fellowship with the Lord. It has stopped their spiritual growth. It makes them intolerant in that they think everybody else must have had an experience similar to theirs or they are just not Christians. Human experience can never solve the problems and answer the questions that we meet with from day to day.

There is nothing that can hide the truth so much as human tradition. It makes the Word of God of none effect. It substitutes the word of man for the Word of God. It puts a creed before belief in what God has said. All too often it tries to copy the true church with a man-made one, not an organism, but an organization.

The idea of human merit does away with the finished work of Christ and puts in its stead works made with hands. Human merit requires a hell to torture those who deserve (?) it. It requires a heaven and rocking chairs for those who do good works. Under the human merit system, man can glory in the work of his hands. He can earn indulgences of the flesh. He can attain unto a holiness apart from the holiness of Christ. He can commit a mortal sin and have to suffer for it. Under this system no man can be sure he is saved till he comes to some great general judgment and his works assessed. He can never have real peace and security. He may be saved today and lost tomorrow. So he keeps his nose on the grindstone daily and prays that he may be saved at last.

But those who know Christ never stop to indulge in these false and vain philosophies that dishonor God and His Word. They can rest in the finished work of Christ. Saved by grace, they can then turn their attention to the good works which were before ordained that they should walk in them. They know they are saved. Being in Christ, they are as secure as He is. They do not sadly seek for the blessing, but know that they are blessed with every blessing that is spiritual in Christ. They do not seek to improve the flesh so that it might be fit for heaven, but rejoice in the new man which cannot sin and which cannot be improved, neither needs to be. They do not seek forgiveness for sins, but rejoice that they have been forgiven. They know they have a perfect standing before God in spirit even tho they still have some of the flesh left in them.

Before we continue, perhaps we should go back and pick up a few threads of thought. It has been brought to my attention that **THE QUICK AND THE DEAD**, at times, appears to be an argument against a hell rather than a treatise on the condemnation of the world. This is not, nor was it the intention of the article as I stated in the first issue. If the phrasing at times seems to be against a later day reckoning it is only because we have used so many references containing and embracing this very theme.

Condemnation has come upon the world, or this age, in the form of death. The past references have shown the numerous times this is alluded to. In future articles we will check other references that contain this line of doctrine. So I hope the reader will bear in mind, tho it may sound ambiguous at times, that we are not so much concerned about future punishment, but with the curse that already has come upon the world. But even as was the curse, so is the salvation thru Christ that is now a reality.

Now this condemnation was death. God said, --FOR IN THE DAY THAT THOU EATEST THEREOF THOU SHALT SURELY DIE. Adam did eat and from that time on we have in both the Old and the New Testament the fact brought home, IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE (Heb 9:27). If we could only get the multitude of humanity to see and believe this fact, we might see some astonishing results.

The previous references to apollumi and nekros have been used mainly to show that we have *this death* recorded in the Scriptures. This is one of the dominant doctrines of the Bible, rather than the philosophical view that man is a spirit and can't die. What can you do with a spirit that you can't see, can't feel and can't destroy? Perhaps this is a facetious remark, but let us be shocked by it into realizing that we must get our doctrine from the Bible.

Hundreds of references show that man dies.. .the only references indicating that man does not die are direct references to Christ; THE FIRST MAN ADAM WAS A LIVING SOUL. THE LAST ADAM WAS MADE A QUICKENING SPIRIT (1Co 15:45). The first man came from the earth and to the dust he must return. THE FIRST MAN IS OF THE EARTH, EARTHY; THE SECOND MAN IS THE LORD FROM HEAVEN (1Co 15:47).

If it is so written let us check and see if this curse of death has been true from the beginning. Without giving all the references, which would take too much space, we find this in Genesis, AND THE DAYS OF ADAM WERE 930 YEARS AND HE DIED...AND THE DAYS OF SETH WERE 912 YEARS AND HE DIED...AND THE DAYS OF ENOS WERE 905 YEARS AND HE DIED...BUT ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD AND HE...NOT. FOR GOD TOOK HIM...METHUSELAH LIVED 969 YEARS AND DIED.

After the flood the record is the same, men lived and men died. This may be very monotonous reading, but one thing is common to all these people of God, and that is death. With possibly a couple of exceptions, all died. We will continue next month.

--DENTON C. ABBEY

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

THE EDITOR'S DESK

This seems to be a common greeting these days. No one really expects an answer. But let me ask a few questions and you test yourself concerning your Bible study.

Of what tribe was Mahlon? Who was his wife? Of what nationality was she? Who was the father of her nation?

Who was Mahlon's sister-in-law? What choice did she make?

Who was Mahlon's mother? Who was his father? Who married his widow? What famous man was her great grandson?

Now, do you want some more?

Well, who were Miriam's father and mother? Of what tribe were they? Who was her older brother? What was the special privilege of his family thru the ensuing years? Name 2 of his sons. Who was Miriam's younger brother? For what was he famous? What was his wife's name? Who was her father? What happened to Miriam when she criticized her younger brother?

Maybe that bunch was not so bad. But here is an old one. Be careful! Who was the father of Zebedee's children?

Now here is a dandy, as we used to say. What was the name of Samson's heifer?

Are you young folks keeping up so far? It may be that you have neglected your Bible reading. Better get busy.

Who was Andrew's brother? Who was James' brother? What was Matthew's occupation?

What 2 persons died because they lied? What young man was accidentally killed by a fall from a window?

Now, back to the OT again. Watch it! Who was Asenath? What were the names of her 2 sons? Who was her father? What political position did her husband hold?

Take a good breath and think on this one. Who were the 4 Hebrew children taken to Babylon and who became wise men there? Give both the Hebrew and Chaldean names.

In all the land none were found so fair as 3 sisters. What were their names? Who was their father? What very rare thing happened to them?

No doubt somebody will want to shoot me for the question about the sisters. But I just could not resist that one. Maybe we can find something a bit easier now.

Benjamin had only one full brother. What was his name? Name Jacob's wives.

Who saw the longest ladder ever seen? Who was the first sailor? Who sat in the shadow of a gourd vine? Who sat down under a juniper tree and wanted to die?

Who was Abraham's second wife? What prophet was a herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit? Who climbed a sycamore tree? Who was Samuel's mother?

Just about to the end of the column. Are you keeping up so far?

Who said, There is no God? Who said, I will ascend into heaven? Who said, The Lord is my shepherd?

Name 3 persons who lived at Bethany. Who was the first president? What king died of leprosy?

No, I'm not telling the answers. Search.

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OUR ACTIVITIES. Cool weather makes some wood cutting necessary yet. Also have been cutting posts (black locust) and digging holes for them. It is nice to watch the 8 little calves play in the pasture. Daffodils and tulips are gone now, but peonies are about ready to put on a show now. We have lots of feathered friends working on the lawn and in the garden. Of course we have people coming in all the time, too. But we do not publish their names. Confidential. 220 copies of TFT, Vol. 9 reprinted last month.

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