

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #81

STEPS TO A GOAL #31

IF, AT LEAST, IT IS HIM YE HAVE HEARD, AND IN HIM YE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT. 4:21.

We have just seen how that the saints and faithful of Ephesus were not to walk as Gentiles walk. Then follows a description of how these Gentiles had been alienated from the life of God. But they had not so learned Christ.

How had they learned Christ? It is emphasized in Hebrews that God has spoken in these last days by His Son. Not only did the Son speak while on the earth, but He has spoken from heaven. He has spoken from heaven thru such men as Peter, Paul, James, John, and others. Their words are the words of Christ.

But there is yet another way that the Lord speaks to men today. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit (the new nature), that we are the children of God. The Spirit Himself goes so far as to instruct heathen converts to put on clothes, throw away fetishes, and burn their idols. So these Ephesians not only had the Word of God to instruct them, but they also had the Holy Spirit to teach them. This teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit must not be overlooked or neglected.

Now the Holy Spirit is none other than Christ Himself in the believer and speaking to Him. So they had learned Christ, not just something about Him. There is a difference.

Now Christ is not only in the believer, but the believer is in Christ. It is in Christ that these folks have been taught. Those alienated from the life of God cannot be in Christ, neither can Christ be in them. Therefore they cannot be taught of Him nor can they be taught in Him. Neither is it profitable to waste our time in trying to instruct them. Their first need is life in Him.

Those that are taught by the Spirit have wisdom. Paul said that he spoke things not in the wisdom that men teach, but the things that the new creature teaches.

Knowledge comes also by teaching. But the knowledge of Christ which Paul was so eager to learn is not taught by men. Neither could he learn the fellowship of His suffering thru the wisdom of this world.

It is fortunate for most of us that these things are as they are. The teaching from above is freely given to all men who believe regardless of their scholastic attainments in the schools of the world. So it is possible for anybody to be taught in Christ and to hear Him whether he ever went to school or not. Just note the 40 writers of the Bible. They range from a king down to a herdsman. Yet all were taught of the Holy Spirit and inspired to write this great book which is perfect in unity.

If we are ignorant of spiritual truth, it is our own fault. It is because we refuse to be taught in Him. It is because we refuse to hear Him. Let us be careful that we do not turn out to be spiritual paupers. Evil ones are ever ready to snatch away the Word before it can take root in us. The heat of tribulation can wither it up. The cares of this world can choke the growth. Let us give heed to the Word and learn.

Man's ways are not God's ways, neither are man's thots God's thots. At a feast man would serve the good wine first. But when the Lord intervened, the good wine came last. There is a principle here that we need to learn.

Man talks about day and night. But God spoke of the evening and morning being the first day. At one time the day was reckoned from noon to noon. Then later it was from sunset to sunset. Now man has gotten so far behind that he counts the day from midnight to midnight. This also may be because of his love for darkness rather than light.

At any rate, we do find God's principle set forth in Ps 30:5;

FOR HIS ANGER ENDURETH BUT A MOMENT;

IN HIS FAVOR IS LIFE:

WEeping MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT.

BUT JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

The present night on the earth is because of the darkness of evil. But a new day will dawn.

Prophecy speaks of a new day arising on Israel. Then shall nations come to her light. But she has no light for the nations now.

The powers of darkness overshadow the earth at the present time, but the believer has been delivered from the power of darkness. Those who have been alienated from the life of God walk in darkness, their understanding having been darkened.

Night and day speak of a creation which is under a curse. We do not think of night and day being known before the overthrow. We read that a time is coming when there will be no more night. That is when sin and death have been destroyed from God's universe.

Even the great geological ages had periods of darkness, possibly millions of years in duration. When God began to get this earth ready for human habitation, the first thing He did was to bring to an end one of those great periods of darkness and there was light. Truly that shows that the Word of God is a light that shines in a dark place.

We read of a night coming in which no man works. Our Lord truly was right about that. For the darkness of the dark ages set in soon and there was no light of the gospel for hundreds of years. The day began to dawn with the Reformation. But that dawning is very slow and the light is still dim.

There must be a sunset before a sunrise. We need to keep that in mind. It is a message of hope. When our Lord is manifested in glory, then will His mystery church be manifested with Him and for them there will be no more sunset. No night in the new creation.

The night of sin is terrible. It is an array of vexations and pain. It is a tale of disappointments. It is watered with tears. But the psalmist says that these are but for a moment. They will be followed by a life of joy. The morning begins God's eternal day.

Do we waste time asking why, and complain of the tears and vexations and disappointments? Do we, like Job, try to argue for our own integrity and then blame God for the night?

THE COLOSSIAN LETTER (CONT.)

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND THE AGES?

Paul says to the Colossians (3:16 etc.);

"Let the inspiring Word of Christ dwell in your hearts. Let it enrich you with its boundless wealth. Let it endow you with all wisdom. Teach and admonish one another with psalms, with hymns of praise, with spiritual songs of all kinds. Only let them be pervaded with grace from heaven. Sing to God in your hearts and not with your lips only.

"And in general; whatever you do, whether in word or deed, let everything be done in the name of Jesus Christ. And (again I repeat it) pour out your thanksgiving to God the Father through Him.

"Ye wives, be subject to your husbands, for it becomes you in Christ.

"Ye husbands, love and cherish your wives, and use no harshness towards them.

"Ye children, be obedient to your parents in all things. This is commendable and lovely in Christ.

"Ye parents, vex not your children. They might lose heart and grow sullen.

"Ye slaves and hired servants, be obedient in all things to the masters set over you in the flesh. Do not render them service only when their eyes are upon you. Do not aim merely to please men. But serve in all sincerity of heart. Serve as living in the sight of your Heavenly Master. Stand in awe of Him.

"And in everything that you do, work faithfully and with all your soul (being), as laboring not for men, but for the great Lord and Master Himself.

"For ye know that you have a Master. From Him you will receive the glorious inheritance as your recompense, whether or not you may be defrauded of your due by men.

"Yes, Christ is your Master and you are His slaves. He that does a wrong shall be requited for his wrong-doing. I say not this of slaves only, but of masters also. There is no partiality, no respect of persons, in God's distribution of rewards and punishments.

"Therefore, ye masters, do you also on your part deal justly and equitably by your slaves and servants, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

"Be earnest and unceasing in prayer. Keep your minds and hearts awake while praying. Remember also (as I have so often told you) that thanksgiving is the goal and crown of prayer.

"Meanwhile in your petitions forget not myself Paul--my fellow-laborer Timothy--your evangelist Epaphras--all the teachers of the gospel.

"Pray that God may open a door for the preaching of the Word, to the end that we may proclaim the free offer of grace to the Gentiles--the great mystery of Christ for which I am now a prisoner in bonds.

"So shall I declare it fearlessly, as I am bound to proclaim it.

"Walk wisely and discreetly in all your dealings with unbelievers. Allow no opportunity to slip through your hands, but buy up every passing moment."

There are some who would try to tell you that the church of the dispensation of the mystery will have its future abode on the earth. They do err, not knowing the Scriptures.

If the earth is to be the abode of this church, then why does God teach it and prepare it for a heavenly abode? Would He deliberately mislead? If so, what would be the motive?

Eph 1:3. God says that this church is blest with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (not on the earth).

Eph 1:10. God is going to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth.

Eph 1:18. Christ has an inheritance in the holiest of all.

Eph 2:6. The church is made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ (not somewhere on the earth).

Eph 2:19. This is connected with 1:8 above and says that members of that church are fellowcitizens in the holiest of all.

Eph 3:10. Even now the church is a display sample to the powers of the heavens.

Eph 5:8. Walk as children of light. The light is the Shekinah glory of the holy of holies.

Eph 6:12. The church does not have to fight a battle on earth against the Amorite, but is beset by wicked powers in high places.

Ph'p 3:20. The citizenship of this church is in heaven, not somewhere on the earth.

Col 1:5. A hope is laid up in heaven (not a treasure).

Col 1:12. The church is to partake of the inheritance in the holiest of all in the Shekinah light (No reference to the earth here).

Col 3:1. This church is to seek those things which are above. The meek of this group do not inherit the earth!

Col 3:2. This church is to set its affection on things above. Where? Where Christ sitteth.

Col 3:4. This church will be with Him in the epiphaneia (not in the parousia or the apocalypse). This has to do with the heavenlies, not the earth.

Tit 2:13. This church is to look for the appearing (epiphaneia) in the heavenlies.

Every effort is made to prepare the church of the dispensation of the mystery for a heavenly home. No Scripture anywhere says that it is not to be in the heavenlies in resurrection. No one has attempted to bring forth such a reference for they know there is none!

It is up to every member of the church of the mystery to prepare for the home far above all. To neglect to do so would be foolish, like the foolish virgins. Even if there were a doubt about it, still it would be foolish not to be prepared. Beware lest somebody beguile you of your crown! You might suffer loss.

In the kingdom the meek shall inherit the earth. It was right and proper that they should look forward to that and even put their affection on it. But not so today. We look far beyond the stars where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. There is our hope, future abode, and future blessings. Let us hold fast the truth.

A PLEA FOR CONSISTENCY

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #10

If the church, as we know it today, began at Pentecost, then why does it not celebrate this great event as commanded in the Scriptures? The full directions for its observance may be found in Le 23:15-21.

Of course it was just 50 days after the Passover. But who today knows when the Passover was to be observed? Many pretend to keep it, but it is seldom that it is kept according to the time and manner that God specified. It seems that each group celebrates it according to its own notions and convenience. God's directions are almost totally ignored.

Most professing Christians can keep a ritual originated in Babylon and call it the Lord's Supper or some other name and the world does not know the difference. Gentiles can claim a Jewish holiday, at which only Jews could have been present, as the birthday of their church and nobody seems to have the gumption to question it. But we still wonder why they never celebrate that birthday.

Did it ever occur to you why the Jews were scattered all thru the then known world? You have the fact related in Acts 2 that they were from every nation under heaven and 12 representative nations are named. Look them up. You will find that it was no understatement that these were all the countries known at that time.

Here is the reason. The oracles of God were committed to the Jews. They were the channel of blessing to the Gentiles. No church could have been established without them, for only Jews could have offices and do service in the church at that time. So the way was prepared for Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, to go out into the nations and establish churches in which there were Gentiles. All the time the Jew was first. So Paul could not start a church where there were no Jews.

If a church began at Pentecost, then it was a purely Jewish church. Only Jews were present. When in the middle of Acts some Gentiles were taken into these churches, a special council was held at Jerusalem to take care of the matter. The Jews at first objected, and rightly so. They had had no other revelation till Paul came along with his gospel.

If the church began at Acts 13, or thereabouts, then it must have a Jew for teacher or pastor, and other Jews to hold various positions or offices. Gentiles absolutely were not eligible, as Paul explains in Romans.

A church in which Gentiles could be leaders and expound the Word was not known till after Israel were set aside at Acts 28:28. A church made up wholly of Gentile believers was unheard of till after Acts 28:28. It was not possible.

If the church began at Pentecost, let us then observe its birthday and the Passover according to the directions given. If it began at Acts 13, let us have Jewish ministers and workers in it according to instructions plainly given for it. Why make a change in God's express commands? If it began in Eden, as some claim, then throw out all kingdom and church teaching as we know it and begin looking for paradise.

Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, spends most of the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters trying to impress upon his Roman readers the importance of this curse of death. In fact, so concerned is he with the subject that he uses the word some 36 times in these chapters. And not only does he mention death, but he alludes to the state of sin and condemnation an even greater number of times.

Now this seems odd, if death is not real. Paul, who swears he has given the whole gospel of God, fails to mention once in these three chapters that the punishment is a hell of fire, or a separation from God, or a banishment into outer darkness. Rather, he pounds home, chapter after chapter, that the wages of sin is death. While the good news he is preaching is the resurrection that is to come thru faith in Christ.

It would be fairly tedious to count all the times Paul refers to DEATH AND SIN in all his epistles. Instead, let us turn to the other side of the argument and see how many times he refers to the words *hell, fire, or torment*. Now as we stated above, in this one epistle to the Romans in 3 chapters he uses the word death 36 times. But a careful search of his complete works will show that we have but 4 references to the words *fire, hell, torment, or everlasting punishment* (See 2Th 1:8; 1Co 15:55; Heb 10:27 and 12:29). And these, for the most part, bolster no argument for the proverbial punishment by everlasting fire.

Now how does one reconcile these facts if we cast away the doctrine of death as the end of natural man? Are we to substitute some other doctrine? Are we to hold up some idolatrous verse in Scripture and cry, *Eureka, I have the answer?* This has been done in the past and will be done in the future, but that doesn't make it fact.

FOR HE THAT IS DEAD IS FREED FROM SIN (Ro 6:7). Here we have a double barreled phrase-- HE THAT IS DEAD. Can this mean separation from God? Can it mean being in an everlasting fire? Would either of these conditions free a man from sin? Ridiculous! Rather, it would prove that he was still sinful. But here it says that he is FREED from sin.

God is not necessarily trying to reform man but rather resurrect him. Death reigns in this world, but life in the next. Paul says in the 7th chapter of Romans that even he cannot do the good that he knows he might. And so in the 24th verse he says in despair, O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM, WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH? But he has a ready answer. In 1Co 15, after lamenting their faith in the resurrection he says, SO ALSO IS THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. IT IS SOWN IN CORRUPTION IT IS RAISED IN INCORRUPTION, IT IS SOWN IN DISHONOR-- IT IS SOWN A NATURAL BODY; IT IS RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY. SO WHEN THIS CORRUPTIBLE SHALL HAVE PUT ON INCORRUPTION, AND THIS MORTAL BODY SHALL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN SHALL BE BROUGHT TO PASS THE SAYING THAT IS WRITTEN, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. FOR HE MUST REIGN, TILL HE HATH PUT ALL ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET. THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH. D.C.A.

THE TERAPHIM

This word first appears in Ge 31:19, 34, 35 and is translated *images*. This is where Rachel stole her father's images, or the household gods when Jacob's party left the house of Laban by night. Altho Laban is counted as a worshipper of the true God, yet he had these aids to worship and even called them his gods in contrast to the God of Jacob's father (vv. 29, 30).

It next appears in J'g 17:5; 18:14, 17, 18, 20. Again it is used of images that were for worship or for an aid to worship. Note that in these passages it is mentioned along with a graven image. So the teraphim were not classed as graven images. But they had to do with worship. Pictures of deity as used today are not exactly graven images, but they keep the same company. They are not according to the second commandment (Ex 20:4-6).

In 1Sa 15:23 this word is translated *idolatry*. It is in company with the word iniquity. Need more be said?

It again appears in 1Sa 19:13, 16 where Michal made an image of David and put it in a bed to deceive Saul and save David's life.

It is translated *images* in 2Ki 23:24 and is found in company with *familiar spirits, wizards, idols, and abominations*. Josiah destroyed all these in his reign. A spiritual revival always makes these things scarce.

In Ho 3:4 it seems that these may have some connection with a family roster or table of genealogy. We are not sure about this.

The last and 15th reference is in Zec 10:2. There it is in connection with diviners and is translated *idols*. So these images may have had some connection with good luck charms and fortune telling. There is nothing good said about them. They are evidence of a spiritual decline in every instance.

That they are evidence of a spiritual decline is shown in Judges. Not only did they have these teraphim, but they had dances at Shiloh at the yearly feasts (21:19). And so today when you find teraphim in the so-called house of God, you also can expect to find the dancing.

In history we discover that the wives of devout Jehovah worshippers fondled teraphim in secret. Women seem more prone to idolatry than men and many of these innovations seen in places of worship today are there because of the women suggesting them (cf. Re 2:20).

These aids to worship may seem to be innocent enough, but can lead to the worst of idolatry. A beautiful picture of deity over an altar is very appealing to the flesh. A Bible on another altar flanked with candles makes a fair show in the flesh too. Not many years ago the Babylonian cross was abhorred by the Protestants. Now you find it all over their places of worship(?).

Now what is the solution to this idolatrous condition today? Should we put away all these things and force people to do without them? Or would it be better to give them the Word of God and let it work in them? Would it not be as it has been in the past, that when there was a spiritual revival, the people themselves put these things away?

THE EDITOR'S DESK

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THANX A LOT to all of you who have been so good in sending us your new address when you moved. It has saved us trouble and expense. Also thanks for the new names of those who might be interested. Our mailing list is growing.

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