

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #87

GAPS IN SCRIPTURE

4:24

CREATED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS.

I. CREATION. God's creation was not all completed in Genesis 1. The process is still going on. There are those who are being created after the image of Him. The members of the church are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. As for the church, God took Jew and Gentile for to create in Himself of the twain one new man. One great truth to remember is that God's work is creative, not reformation. It is man that vainly seeks to reform society and the world.

II. THE NEW MAN. All who are in Adam die. Nothing more can be said for the old man. There is no hope of resurrection in view. But all who are in Christ will have a resurrection (be made alive). All man's hopes that he has in God can only be realized in resurrection. So in the new man there is no longer the alienation from the life of God. In the new creation there is no room for vanity of mind. But created in righteousness and holiness prepares for service in the holy of holies. Members have been chosen with a view of being holy and without blame for this special service. Compare with the requirements for Aaron and the priests. We must not forget that the sphere of blessing is also the sphere of service. We have been chosen with the intent that in a certain sphere the manifold wisdom of God might be made known.

III. THE IMAGE. This new creation is after God, or according to God. The first man, Adam, was made in the image of God. But that image was dimmed, if not lost. The new man is to be conformed to the image of God's Son. This conformity leads up to the goal where God may be all and in all.

Now if Christ is Head of the church, then He must be the Head of each member. If that church is a new creation, then each member must be a new creation, a living stone to be a part of the temple that grows. If the church is spoken of as a new man, then each member needs to put on the new man. If God is dwelling in this temple in Spirit, then each member should pray that Christ may dwell in his heart by faith. The need today is for practice, as well as doctrine. Each member is a part of the whole, it is true, but that does not render him anonymous and take away his individual responsibility.

IV. KNOWLEDGE. It is true that there is a knowledge that puffs up. But that knowledge is not desirable. First of all, man should know God as Creator. Ignorance results in a reprobate mind. Blindness is a character of those that believe not. The righteousness and holiness of our text can never be acquired outside of a knowledge of God as Creator and Christ as the Head. Ignorance is darkness of understanding. Read the whole chapter again.

Too many professing Christians practically brag that they are ignorant of the Word. They seem to think that it is the style to be in the dark concerning spiritual things. This is because of blindness. All this is the opposite of the light in the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There is a knowledge that edifies and does not puff up.

If those who profess to know and teach the Scriptures would take heed to the gap principle in the Word, they would not be in such confusion as to what is truth for today. But too many have overlooked this great truth and so they try to apply things to today which belong to the future or to the past.

Yet it is very plain that there is a great interval between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. What occupies the gap?

By faith Israel passed thru the Red Sea. By faith they saw the walls of Jericho fall. But in that 40 years between there was a lot that was not of faith. It took Israel 40 years to make an 11 days journey. Why?

When our Lord read from the scroll in the Synagogue at Nazareth He read of the acceptable year of the Lord and stopped in the midst of a sentence. He did not finish. He did not read of the day of the vengeance of God. If He had, then He could not have said that those things were fulfilled in their ears. Over 1900 years have passed by and the day of vengeance has not come yet. Why? What is happening in the meantime? What is the plan and purpose in the gap or interval? When will vengeance come?

We read in the Psalms about the stone which the builders refused. But some day it is to become the head of the corner. Why the interval? Where is the rejected stone today?

In Isaiah we read that a Child is born and a Son is given. That was fulfilled in Bethlehem. But the following words have not come true yet; that the government shall be upon His shoulder. What is happening in the meantime?

Mary was told that she should conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son and should call His name Jesus. But there is a long gap between this event and what shall follow. For it was added that He should be great and should be called the Son of the Highest; and that the Lord God should give to Him the throne of His father David. Why is there such a long time between?

Daniel was told that from the restoration of the temple in 405 B.C. there would be a period of 490 years till Christ should come to set up His kingdom. This went along according to the road map until Acts 28:28 and there has been a detour that has lasted about 1900 years and has about 100 years to go yet. Why? Why should a bridge be out at the end of Acts and all this big detour till prophetic times start again?

Again in Isaiah we read that the Lord is to bruise Him, put Him to grief, and make His soul an offering for sin. Then we find the gap again. It shall follow that He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands. He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. It is a long way from the cross to the crown!

Now whenever the reader does a little right division and finds out why these intervals had to be, he has gone a long way toward finding what is truth for today. The interval is occupied with something. The gap has a purpose in the plan of God. Some mighty important things are happening today, believe it or not!

THE WAGES OF SIN

RO 6:23

FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

If we are to find what this means, we must see to whom it was said. That can be found by taking the book as a whole first. It, the book, was written to the saints at Rome (1:7). Then the structure of this passage extends from 6:1 to 7:6. The chapter begins with the words, SHALL WE CONTINUE IN SIN? He is talking to believers, as does he in this whole section. Believers have been identified with Christ in His death, and also with Him in life. They have been freed from the dominion of sin. But they can still continue to sin, as the first verse indicates.

Now suppose that a believer continues to sin. What is the result? This passage says that death is the result. But man already has inherited death from Adam, so how can death be added to him again? Or is it the man that dies?

Maybe we can find some parallel passage that will help with this problem. In Gal 6:8 which is preceded by the statement that whatsoever a man sows, that will he reap (speaking to the believer), it follows that he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. If he follows the inclinations of the old nature, he will do works that will be burned up (1Co 3:15). Now we begin to see some light. It is the works that see *corruption*, that *die*, that are *burned up*. The believer in that instance is saved, but as by fire. That is the clue that we needed.

In Col 2:22 we have an example of the same thing, but there it deals with the commandments of men, their ordinances and rules, which are to *perish*. Also Col 3:25 gives a solemn warning to the believer that he shall suffer for the wrong he has done.

So then this passage in Rom 6 tells us that it is a dangerous thing for a believer to sin. There is a certain amount of death that will touch him. He will smell of the fire that consumes his works which are made of things that do not abide. He will suffer loss.

In connection with this is the admonition in Col 2:18 where we are warned that we could be beguiled of our reward. When our Lord was teaching His disciples concerning the things of the kingdom, he said for them to lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Mt 6:20). Here again is corruption or death. He is teaching this to His disciples (5:1,2).

Also we have the parable of the talents where servants (not enemies) were given certain responsibilities as a test for faithfulness before being given greater tasks. You remember how that one failed the test and even what he had was taken from him and given to him that had done well. This servant was banished from the land of promise for the duration of the kingdom. The parallel to this can be found in Dan 12:2 and John 5:28,29.

BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS -- see next column.

THE GIFT OF GOD

RO 6:23

FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

This word *wages* at one time referred to the daily fish rations of the Roman soldiers. Men who delight in the works of the flesh expect wages or rations. But the wages of sin or the old nature in man is only death.

But what is the gift? That is the question that we really need to look into. We are told in Scripture what the fruit (not works) of the spirit or new nature are. They are a natural growth from the new creation. No wages are in store for them. But there is a reward for faithfulness.

Yes, faithfulness is what is required of the steward. It matters not whether he is steward of a large household or a small one. It matters not whether he has one talent or five. It is not what or how much he does that counts, but how faithful to the trust he may be.

Some men started in to work in the morning, some came in later, and some were hired at the eleventh hour. Each was given a penny. It did not matter how many hours or how much was done. Each was rewarded for faithfulness.

The rich young ruler wanted to know what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life. First he was told to keep the commandments. Then he was to sell all and give to the poor. Last and possibly greatest, he was to follow Christ. Eternal life here again is a reward which this believing young ruler wanted to receive. Some disciples wanted the same thing in the way of having a high position in the kingdom. When the believing Cornelius and his household were given entrance into the kingdom, the people of Jerusalem made the remark that even unto the Gentiles was granted repentance unto life. Here again the same thing is in mind. This is the first time that Gentiles had been allowed to share in the spiritual blessings of Israel, their reward.

Timothy is admonished to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (the crown or reward, 1Ti 6:12). It is perfectly good and lawful to strive for a crown. Our Lord is pleased with such, and those who endure will reign with Him, regardless of dispensation.

This eternal life is given as a reward to both Jewish and Gentile believers in the Acts period of time, but to the Jew first (Ro 2:7, 10).

So according to the argument in Romans 6, the believer has been freed from the bondage of sin (the old nature). He can serve either the flesh or the spirit, whichever he chooses. But the one entails loss. The other entails reward.

Now all this time my readers have been wondering what about John 3:16 and 1 John 5:11,12. Well, the way John uses the term *eternal life* is another study. All we can say right here is that he uses it as a present possession and the key to resurrection. But all the rest of the NT writers use it as something in the future after resurrection and as a reward for faithful service. Now I hope that this will make you get busy and study to see what is the truth.

HE HATH CHOSEN US... TO THE INTENT THAT

EPH 1:4; 3:10

These two expressions are so far apart that few have thot of connecting them. But after one reads and rereads the first 3 chapters of Ephesians a few times, he will begin to notice that there is a sequence that cannot be ignored.

We might say at first thot that we were chosen to be holy and without blame before God in love. But there is no full stop there. The argument goes right on and on. So that is not the goal. It is not the plan and purpose of the ages. To be holy and without blame is greatly to be desired in those who have a part in God's scheme, it is true. But there is something beyond to which all this leads.

After the announcement of our being chosen, we have the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Spirit (4-14). Then follows the prayer that we might know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of His inheritance in the holiest of all, and what is the greatness of His power.

That is followed by our togetherness in Christ (2:5,6), and then the 3 works (2:9,10). In 14-17 peace is declared as threefold, starting with the fact that He is our peace. Verses 19-22 tell of our being fellow-citizens in the holiest of all and fitly framed and builded together for a holy temple. Some more togetherness.

In chapter 3, verse 6 we have a definition of the mystery which is followed by the purpose of those chosen and who make up the church which is the body of Christ.

Going back over the ground traversed, we note that after the choosing there are 7 threefold items of doctrine leading up to the purpose for all this. After this great purpose is announced we have the wonderful prayer of 3:14-21. The last 3 chapters of the book have to do with the walk that must go with such a calling and purpose. It is a walk that should be expected from those who are to be holy and without blame, or without spot or wrinkle. This work of the church is far greater than that of the Aaronic priesthood which also was to be holy.

At the present time, while here in the flesh on this terrestrial ball, we can join with Paul in making known to all men what is the dispensation of the mystery (3:9). But we must also realize that now, in the present time (as well as in the future) we the church are to make known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies the manifold wisdom of God (verse 10). Just as God chose Israel to make His name known among the nations of the earth, just so have we been chosen who make up the church of the dispensation of the mystery, to make something known in the places outside of this earth and its nations. Our sphere of blessing and service then are outside of this earth and the nations of it.

What manner of men ought we to be if we have such a high and holy calling and ministry? Are we to be subject to carnal laws and ordinances; or to the law of love? If we walk in love and as children of light, do we need to have daily rules and regulations to guide us? Rituals that would impress the nations and make known the name of Jehovah to nations have no place here.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #16

DENTON C. ABBEY

There is an old proverb that I learned at my mother's knee which goes like this, *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread*. I quote this because it outlines my position perfectly. For in this article we are going to take up the discussion of Luke 16, one of the most controversial passages in the Bible. And for me to try to settle this age-old problem here is little short of foolish. However, we will present a few facts as promised and let the reader decide.

For our first study, I have a list of the parables (?) in Luke. Take careful note as to context and usage.

- ♠ 5:36 Patch in old garment. Wine in bottles.
- ♠ 6:39 Blind lead the blind. Mote. Good fruit.
- 7:41 A certain creditor had two debtors.
- ♠ 8:5 A sower went out to sow.
- 10:30 A certain man went down to Jericho.
- ♠12:16 A certain man had a piece of ground.
- ♠13:6 A certain man had a fig tree.
- 13:19 The grain of mustard seed.
- 13:21 Leaven and the 3 measures of meal.
- ♠14:7 Pharisees chose out the best rooms.
- 14:16 A certain man had a supper.
- ♠15:4 Lost sheep & 99. The 10 pcs. of silver.
- 15:11 A certain man had two sons.
- 16:1 A certain rich man had a steward.
- 16:19 A certain rich man and Lazarus.
- ♠18:1 There was a judge in a city.
- ♠18:9 Two went up to the temple to pray.
- ♠19:11 A certain nobleman went into a far....
- ♠20:9 A certain rich man planted a vineyard.
- ♠21:29 Behold the fig tree and all the trees.

These constitute all the parables (?) in Luke unless I have missed some. I have grouped several together for brevity's sake, as, *The garment and the wine*. So some that are not called parables directly can be classified as such. This is apparent in Luke 15:3. Here Christ begins His discourse by naming the parable, but does not conclude His dissertation until He gets to Luke 16:31, which includes *The rich man and Lazarus*. So here are several illustrations that are certainly parables, tho each is not immediately prefixed as such.

Now you will note there are 20 illustrations in this group. Twelve are called parables directly by our Lord (marked by ♠), with at least another 6 being included in the same discourse, or referred to from the other gospels.

Out of this list of 20, there are 10 that start out with the words, *A certain man*, or, *A certain rich man*. Four of these are called parables, with at least another 4 coming under the same heading in a discourse.

Out of the 20 there are actually, then, only one or two that could possibly be excluded from the category of parables. And one of these is our controversial Luke 16:19.

But is it? That is our question. And who can judge the other 19 as being parables and then arbitrarily say that the 20th is not a parable? We cannot get away from the fact that it is listed under the discourse beginning with 15:3. It uses the same terminology. As for me, I would not want to take the responsibility of saying that it is *NOT* a parable.

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