

## STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #98

## PAUL'S GOSPEL DURING ACTS

5:2

AND WALK IN LOVE, AS CHRIST ALSO HATH LOVED US, AND HATH GIVEN HIMSELF FOR US AN OFFERING AND A SACRIFICE TO GOD FOR A SWEETSMELLING SAVOUR.

God is in the business of forgiving people who in no way merit it. His forgiveness is so great and widespread that He asks no questions. We, as dear children, are to imitate Him.

As dear children, we are to love, to walk or act all the time, every day, in love. This love seeks for happiness and satisfaction in the good of others. This love forgets self by remembering others. And there is no greater happiness than that of acting so as to please the Father. The gratification of selfish desires only ends in unrest and dissatisfaction. We need a higher goal.

We must remember that in love and forgiveness, God could not justify the ungodly and still be just until the Son offered Himself as an altar sacrifice. This was the expression of His love for His Father and His purpose, and to us. There is no exposition of the atonement here. Stop and read Isa. 53 and Rom. 4.

The Lord's death brot about our pardon and peace. Not His life here on earth as the Incarnate Son of God, but His death bought our redemption. There is no redemption in imitating His life. There is no merit in trying to walk in His steps. We must look for a finished work, a work that He alone could do.

He gave Himself for us. This is the hard thing to realize. Why should He? As we said above, He loved the Father and so He did the Father's will in our behalf. That is why He gave Himself for us. He took the cup of death and separation in our stead. Such love, such sacrifice, would melt the heart of man. But it was not for that purpose. It was wholly a sacrifice.

God in Christ did forgive us. He could not forgive us otherwise and still be just. We repeat that. It is needful that we understand. God's love and mercy could never avail unless they could be bestowed lawfully. Sin must have its reward. Either we or somebody else must pay the penalty. Christ was the *somebody else*. And because of that fact, God could express His love and mercy and be just at the same time.

We cannot adequately express the love of God and of Christ. But that love does commend itself to us that Christ died for us, the just for the unjust. And for that fact, we too must follow the example and have no room for an unforgiving spirit, but walk in love.

If we expect all to react to our love, we have another guess coming. Very few will allow God to love them. We are going to find that not many are going to allow us to love them. But that is no excuse for us not to go on loving everybody.

Note that this is the walk chapter. You will find it 3 times. Look for them and put them together. You will have there the complete walk of the child of God. But the first thing is to walk in love.

Among those who attempt to divide aright the Word of truth today, there is no more confusion in any one branch than in the question of what Paul was preaching during Acts.

During Acts the Jew was first for the simple fact that salvation was yet of the Jews. Also the Jew was first because the gospel of the 12 was about kingdom and the kingdom is primarily of the Jews. The King was an heir of David's throne. All that is made plain in Acts.

The apostles were instructed concerning the kingdom at the beginning of Acts. Their gospel was observed by Paul and he was to proclaim what he had seen. That he did.

There was a great revival at the first at Jerusalem and in all Judea. But that gradually died down and the Jewish nation in that part of the world did not come to repentance and receive their Messiah. So after the murder of Stephen by his fellow-countrymen, Peter was called to preach in the house of Cornelius. Here was the first instance of Gentiles being grafted into the olive tree in order to provoke it to bear fruit. Just that one instance was for all Judea, including Jerusalem. You know the reaction among the Jews at Jerusalem.

Now Paul appears on the scene. He preaches what he has seen. He failed in Damascus and Jerusalem. That was not his field. Just as the 12 were to preach to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea, so Paul was to preach to the Jews of the dispersion in Asia Minor and Europe, even to Rome. And when the Jews opposed the gospel of the kingdom, then Paul would go to the Gentiles and graft them into the kingdom so as to provoke the Jews to jealousy. See Romans 10 and 11. Now when he turned to the Gentiles, he preached what was revealed to him. This preaching to the Gentiles was revealed to him just as definitely as was that vision Peter saw on the housetop when he was to do the same thing. And all to the same purpose.

Now you can see why that Paul's preaching never was against the preaching of the 12. All had the coming King and kingdom as their theme. Peter never said that Paul's gospel was wrong nor did Paul ever say the same of Peter. The council at Jerusalem recognized the fact that Paul was bringing Gentiles into the kingdom by grace and gave their blessing to his preaching.

Any attempts to array Peter against Paul is attempting to discredit the Bible. They worked in perfect harmony. The trouble that did arise was not doctrinal, but on account of the racial prejudices of the Jews and their antipathy to the Gentile believers. They could not quite understand why the Gentiles could have a part in their kingdom for nothing and they themselves still obliged to obey the law.

Paul mentions his twofold ministry in Acts 26:16 and he hastens to add that he had completed all this up to that time.

You will find many references where Paul mentions things connected with the King and His return. Even to the Athenians (Ac 17:31) he announces the judgment of the nations prior to the setting up of the kingdom (M't 25:31-46).

## PAUL'S GOSPEL AFTER ACTS

## WIDEGATE AND BROADWAY

M'T 7:13,14.

1. During Acts Paul himself was looking for the coming of the Lord and His kingdom here on the earth, and that is what he preached. But after Acts Paul learned about a kingdom that was to be in heavenly places. Then he proclaimed it (Eph 1:20, 21).

2. During Acts Paul mentioned 4 or more baptisms. After Acts he allows only one (Eph 4:5; Col 2:12,20; 3:3).

3. During the Acts period of time Paul and his hearers were looking forward to the blessings that had been promised to Abraham. These had to do with a people and a land. Paul also allowed that Gentiles might partake of Israel's spiritual blessings by grace (without becoming Jews and observing the law). But after Acts the promises to Abraham are left behind and it is pointed out that every blessing that is spiritual in Christ in the heavenlies is in reach of anybody regardless of race, etc. See Eph 1:3. This is a great change in point of view.

4. During Acts Paul preached only the hope of Israel, the King and coming kingdom with the necessity of resurrection in realizing that hope. But after that he is not bound for the hope of Israel (Ac 28:20) but is a prisoner for the Gentiles (Eph 3:1).

5. During Acts Paul observed the laws concerning meats and drink (fasts and feasts), holy days or Jewish festivals, and moons by which the Passover and other festivals were regulated, and Sabbaths which were a part of the covenant with the Jews. But after Acts these all pass away (Col 2:16).

6. During Acts the Jew was first, in receiving the gospel, first in reward or punishment in the judgment of believers. But there is no place of priority for the Jew after Acts 28:28. Read carefully Eph 2:13-19.

7. During Acts Paul was looking for the personal return (parousia) of the Lord to the earth and the setting up of the kingdom (1Co 15 and 1Th 4). After Acts Paul looked for the manifestation in heaven (epiphaneia) which comes before the advent and he proclaimed it as the hope of those who would believe it. See Ph'p 3:20; Col 3:4; Titus 2:13.

8. After Acts Paul no longer spoke of those who had the law and those who had not the law. A change has taken place and in the dispensation of the mystery believers are seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (far above the law. Eph 2:6).

9. Up to Acts 28:23 Paul was still expounding the kingdom as set forth by Moses and the prophets. But in Acts 28:31 he began expounding a kingdom which Moses and the prophets knew nothing about, a kingdom which had to do with principalities and powers in the heavenlies.

10. After Acts Paul taught that there were gifts from the ascended Christ (Eph 4:11), and no longer gifts of the Spirit.

11. After Acts Paul no longer expounded the mysteries of the Word, but revealed a mystery that had been hid in God from ages and generations. By a special dispensation of grace this task was allotted to Paul only.

ENTER YE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE: FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE WAY, THAT LEADETH TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY THERE BE WHICH GO IN THEREAT: BECAUSE STRAIT IS THE GATE, AND NARROW IS THE WAY WHICH LEADETH UNTO LIFE, AND FEW THERE BE THAT FIND IT.

This was spoken in the mount to the disciples. How many of the disciples, we do not know. At this time only 4 of the 12 apostles had yet been chosen. It could be that they and the 70 were here. But this one thing we know; when the Lord said YE, He was speaking to disciples, followers of Him. It was not spoken to the multitudes, even tho some of the multitude did find Him here and listen in on the sermon.

Tho the dispensational setting is the kingdom, there is something in this sermon that is arresting. There are principles that are not bound by dispensational frontiers, and here may be one of them. These disciples are exhorted to take the narrow way, not the broad way. This implies that as believers, they have a choice. What does this choice involve?

Here may be the answer. Take it for what it may be worth and see what you make of it. The believer may take the easy way and avoid much persecution and suffering or he may take the hard way and suffer, maybe even unto death. Our Lord taught those who would enter the kingdom that they must love Him more than anything else on earth if they were to be worthy to be His disciples. Do we and other believers about us come up to this requirement? How do we stand?

Today we see that the great bulk of those who profess to be believers are taking life rather easy. Their social life and work come first. They may go to some assembly more or less regularly. They may throw a generous offering into the plate. But they do not take the trouble to have Bible reading and prayer in the home. They do not bother to talk with friends or neighbors about the Word and Christ. In fact they may not even talk it with the children. They take the easy Broadway hoping that it will lead to heaven and a rocking chair there. But that is not the case. They have a judgment to meet. Their works will be evaluated and tested by the fires of divine judgment. According to 1Co 3 they are saved, but as by fire. Their works have been burned up. Where is the reward or LIFE? There will be much weeping and disappointment.

It is only those who enter the strait gate of self denial and service to God, who walk the narrow way, that will be overcomers and enter into the full reward and joys of the Lord. These will reign with Him. And when we read the epistles dealing with the dispensation of the mystery we find echoes of these very same things. There are some who are enemies of the cross and who mind earthly things, whose god is their belly. They have no time for God.

Read again very carefully M't 5-7. Note that all is to and for believers, the disciples. Note each item and the principle involved. You may have a great surprise coming. Then see how much of this you can find in the prison epistles.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #7

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #27

DENTON C. ABBEY

There has been so much superstition, tradition, and even downright lying about Acts, that we feel it necessary to emphasize some things even to the point of repetition. So the following are some facts about Acts that may help the beginner to find his way thru this book which is foundational to any understanding of right division and dispensational truth.

1. The book is made possible by the fact that the Lord's prayer on Calvary, that God should forgive Israel for what they did, was answered. That is why that the Jew is first all thru the book. That is why that no church was formed at any place during that time except in a synagogue or a gathering of Jews. All the rights and privileges of giving the gospel and teaching the Scriptures were theirs exclusively.

2. There was no change in the gospel of the 12 at Acts 13 or any other place before 28:28. Let no one beguile you on this point. What Peter proclaimed at the house of Cornelius was the result of a vision and paved the way for Paul and his gospel to the Gentiles. But it in no way changed the future preaching of Peter. This was his first and last preaching to the Gentiles. None of the others of the 12 ever did such a thing as Peter did.

3. Paul continued to preach the things he had seen right up to Acts 28:28. But this was given only to the Jews. He never preached the things he had seen to the Gentiles. The things he had seen were the things the 12, Stephen and other Jews were preaching to the Jews.

4. In Acts 13 Paul began to preach something else, something which God revealed to him. But this he preached only to Gentiles. This message also ceased at Acts 28:28. And that was because it also concerned the kingdom.

5. When Paul speaks of MY GOSPEL, he refers to the revelation in Ga 1 and expanded later on in the same book. It is the good news that Gentiles can enter the kingdom as such. They did not need to become Jews nor observe the law. So by grace they were enabled to partake of the spiritual blessings of Israel and their kingdom which was promised.

6. There is one compelling thing that makes these facts necessary. That is that Acts is a continuation of the things that Jesus began both to do and teach. And what did He do and teach? Read Luke to find out. But first and foremost He went out proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The 12 and the 70 did likewise, so it is no surprise that the same thing is continued during Acts.

7. We then can see how that the Gospel which Paul preached to the Jews and that which Peter preached differed in no way whatsoever. Paul never said that Peter's gospel was wrong and Peter never said that Paul's gospel was wrong. They were in complete harmony. The only difference was that Paul had a message for the Gentiles and Peter did not. And this message to the Gentiles had the same theme, the coming of the kingdom of heaven. The Gentiles received this message with joy, mainly because that they could have it by grace. No law for them!

The search continued. To see if the Scripture would give a clue as to the state of man, once he was dead, I next looked up the words, *anabaino, anatello, anisteemi, diegiro*, and *egiro*. These are translated in the English by the words, *arise, ascended, went up, come up, spring up, rose up, was up, arose, raise up, stood up, will rise, awake, stir up, and risen*.

Of the 310 times these verbs were used, 91 applied to our Lord. These were as follows: IN THREE DAYS HE SHALL RISE; HE IS RISEN; HE MUST RISE FROM THE DEAD; THIS JESUS HAS GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD; THIS JESUS HAS GOD RAISED UP: THE SON OF MAN BE RISEN, etc., etc.

However, when we came to the 22 references as applied to man, we found some very interesting and revealing facts. Below is a list of these just as they fell on the paper as I was checking reference after reference:

NO MAN HAS ASCENDED...

DAVID HAS NOT YET ASCENDED...

IN THE RESURRECTION WHEN THEY SHALL RISE... WHEN THEY SHALL RISE...(2)

I WILL RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY...(3)

THE DEAD IN CHRIST SHALL RISE FIRST...

DEAD ARE RAISED...(2)

NOW THAT THE DEAD ARE RAISED...(2)

AS THE FATHER RAISES UP THE DEAD AND QUICK...

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP...

RAISED UP INCORRUPTIBLE...(2)

RAISED UP IN GLORY; RAISED TO POWER; RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY

HE THAT RAISED THE LORD JESUS, SHALL RAISE US UP ALSO.

This then is the dossier on the fate of man. Not only does it fail to say that he is risen as in the case of the Lord, but it emphatically tells us that man has not been raised. Note the sequence of events, almost like a pattern.

No man has ascended, not even David, but they shall be raised in due time. The dead in Christ shall rise, incorruptible, a spiritual body to glory and power. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.

One other reference was noted that dealt with man. This was not included in the list above as it was a specific incident. I feel sure that it had nothing to do with man's immortality. This was found in Mt 27:52, AND THE GRAVES WERE OPENED AND MANY BODIES OF THE SAINTS WHICH SLEPT AROSE, AND CAME OUT OF THE GRAVES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION AND WENT INTO THE HOLY CITY, AND APPEARED UNTO MANY. We must note that these had been sleeping. The bodies came from the graves. They were not new resurrection bodies from heaven not made with hands (2Co 5:1,2).

So there we have some 310 references dealing with rising, ascension, etc. But not even a hint that man does anything but return to the dust from which he was taken. God said, DUST THOU ART, AND UNTO DUST SHALT THOU RETURN (Ge 3:19). The dead sleep in the dust of the earth (Da 12:2). ALL FLESH SHALL PERISH TOGETHER, AND MAN SHALL TURN AGAIN UNTO DUST (Job 34:15).

So our search for what a dead man is ends with the grave and a handful of dust.

## INTERROGATIONS

35. *What did Paul have to do with taverns?*

There is no statement that Paul went into any of the taverns (Ac 28:15). The Three Taverns was a land mark on the road to Rome. However, the word *tavern* comes from the Latin word *tabernaculum* which means a *tent*. The "b" is changed to "v" and *tabern* become *tavern*. These were booths along the road where a traveler might get a bite to eat and something to drink and rest a bit. The inn was a little more permanent and was a place where folks could stay overnight.

36. *Why did God contenance Esther's marrying a heathen king when the law was against mixed marriages?*

Maybe Ahasuerus was not so heathen as some might think. Also there was a working out of a purpose whereby Israel in captivity might be restored to their land. It was a little like the case of Moses being brot up in the very palace upon which he brot plagues so severely in later years. He was the deliverer.

Now queen Esther must have had a great deal of influence with the king and it was he who made the first decree that the Jews should return to Jerusalem. It was the son of Esther and the king who later, not only gave them leave to go, but even financed the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem. God uses strange methods to accomplish His purposes.

37. *I saw a statement that hell and the bottomless pit are not the same for none ever come out of hell, but Satan does get released from the bottomless pit. What about this?*

It is true that they are not the same. But the reasoning is wrong. Our Lord was the first and only one to escape from hell to the present moment (See Psa 16:8-11 and Ac 2:25-28,31). Hell will not be able to hold His church or the saved (M't 16:18). You must remember that the hell that the Bible speaks about is not the same as that of the heathen and especially that of the Babylonians. Look it up.

38. *Who was the guiding apostle of the church of Rome? Peter, or Paul?*

There is no record that Peter ever visited Rome. In fact, he went in the opposite direction and the last we hear of him, he is at Babylon (1Pe 5:13). It was Paul who wrote an epistle to the church at Rome. It was Paul who went to Rome to minister to them and to try to convert the Jewish leaders there to the truth also. Since the church at Rome was almost all Gentiles and Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, Peter could have had no part in it for he was an apostle to the Circumcision. So a fable or myth sprang up about Peter and Rome because folks did not know the Word and how to divide it rightly.

39. *Did the wise men come the same nite as the shepherds to see the babe in Bethlehem?*

No. The wise men found him at a house, so He must have been back in Nazareth. It was some time during the 2 years following the Lord's birth. He must have been close to 2 years old when He was taken to Egypt. Read the accounts very carefully and check on this.

## THE EDITOR'S DESK

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