

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #107

5:16

RESURRECTION AND THE MYSTERY

REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL. *Redeeming* refers to buying something at the market place, with the prefix *ek* which means out of. A price must be paid. It is not a gift or something that may be had for nothing.

Time here refers to a proper season or an opportunity. We must look for an opportunity and pay the price for it.

The days are evil. Principalities and powers are determined to wipe out the testimony of the dispensation of the mystery. Satan knows that his days are short. Probably the greatest evil is slothfulness on the part of those who profess the name of Christ. Tradition lulls the great bulk of them to sleep. They are not awake to danger nor to opportunity.

In the next chapter we are exhorted to put on the whole armor of God so that we may withstand in the evil day. So it will get worse as time goes by.

One time Moses bought up an opportunity at a great risk to himself. He interceded for Israel that they might be spared from judgment even at the price of his name being blotted from the book of life (Ex 32:9-35). And those days were indeed evil. God had determined to destroy Israel and make a new nation of Moses. There was no time to lose. Moses had to act quickly. He redeemed the time and Israel were spared.

We have a similar incident in the book of Esther. The wicked Haman had connived to have Israel destroyed in a vast pogrom thruout the land and the provinces. Esther was willing to risk her life to step in the gap and go before the king and intercede for them. She bought up the opportunity and turned the tide.

How many of us are buying up the opportunities today to make known the dispensation of the mystery? What price are we willing to pay? How much zeal do we show?

On the other hand we have an example of one who had the zeal and who was eager to buy up the opportunities, but was not quite honest about it. Self was in the picture. He had the theory that the end justifies the means. I am speaking of Jacob and his getting the birth-right and the blessing. It was not wrong for him to want these. They were perfectly legitimate. But he used the wrong means. He was not willing to wait for God to give what He had promised. So zeal must be accompanied by knowledge and self out of the picture.

When it comes to a matter of service, most folks just do not have the time. But the time will have to be bought. It will be at the expense of doing something we like to do. Self will have to go. It may mean a sacrifice of comfort, position, privileges, and even giving up present livelihood. It may be a great surprise to many that this verse has a literal meaning. And many will be very disappointed when they find that there is a price to be paid. Remember all this is in the realm of service and has to do with reward. It is not working for salvation.

Remember also that this is a part of the walk of the wise (see preceding verse), that they buy up the opportunity.

From time to time the question comes up about the hope of the believer who is in the dispensation of the mystery. Some have suggested that maybe each member, when he died, went immediately to the presence of the Lord. Others are not sure about it. Some seem to think that the people in this hope have a part in the resurrection described in 1Co 15 and 1Th 4. That would make them partakers of Israel's hope and blessings.

About the best way I know to find out about this is to look and see. So let us look at a few references in the epistles written after Acts 28 and see what is said.

YE WERE SEALED WITH THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE, WHICH IS THE EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION. This is Eph 1:13,14. What else but resurrection could redemption mean here?

In Eph 4:30 we find the same event mentioned, AND GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD. WHEREBY YE ARE SEALED UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION.

UNTIL THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST...TILL THE DAY OF CHRIST...THAT I MAY REJOICE IN THE DAY OF CHRIST. These are Ph'p 1:6,10; 2:16. They refer to a future day, a day of reward, of rejoicing for some and maybe not for others. In 4:3 we have mentioned the book of life. This is the roll call for resurrection. A separate study for you.

Col 1:18 emphasizes that Christ is the first-born from the dead. This is resurrection and for what purpose mentioned? In 3:4 there is mention of His appearing and our sharing in it.

THAT DAY is mentioned in 1Ti 1:12,18. Compare this with DAY OF CHRIST above in Ph'p. It must be a day of resurrection and judgment.

In 4:1 of 2Ti we have mention of the appearing, and the judgment of the quick and the dead. Since this appearing is to be in the heavenlies, then the kingdom mentioned is to be that over the principalities and powers, not the kingdom on the earth. In verse 6 Paul speaks of his *departure*. This word is the basis of our word analysis. It means to break up into parts. It is the return of the soul to dust from which it is made. Paul awaits that and is certain that he will receive a reward, a crown, at the appearing in verse 8.

The skeleton of verses 12 and 13 of Titus 2 is LIVE...LOOKING. Looking for what? The glorious appearing of Christ. Can this be possible outside of resurrection?

The basic facts of death and resurrection are not changed by any dispensational differences of advantages. The time and the place may be changed, but that is about all. To cap the whole argument, we cannot deny that Paul was looking for a resurrection (Ph'p 3:11). We are no better than he. So what else should we look for?

If any hold to the theory that members go to be with the Lord immediately after death, they do err in claiming that the resurrection is past already (2Ti 2:18). And furthermore, if it were true that members do go to heaven when they die, then John 3:13, which was written some time after Acts 28:28, is a grave error.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

CHRIST IN SCRIPTURE #2

To assume that God is absolutely sovereign is taking too much for granted. It has been used as a premise in reasoning, and has been the foundation for much error. When man presumes to assume that God is absolutely sovereign, he immediately begins to sit in judgment over God. He concludes what God can do and cannot do. He asserts that God made Satan as he is, that God is the author of sin, and so is responsible for all the mess and misery the world is in.

And not only that, but such men set the devil up as another god and then point out that he is a better recruiter of men than God is. And there is an important point they have missed. Do all who do not belong to God belong to Satan? Just who are the children of the devil?

Now if God is absolutely sovereign, then why is there a goal of the ages in the which God will be all in all (1Co 15:28)? Just how could one improve on absolute sovereignty?

Maybe these folks never realized that God is limited, not only by His nature, but also by circumstances. By nature He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He cannot destroy Satan yet, but will in due time. He could not take Israel out of Egypt till the iniquity of the Amorite was full. When here in flesh He could not take His people under His wing as a hen does her chickens just for the simple reason that they would not. He could not do many mighty wonders in His home community because of their unbelief. And we could go on with a catalog of the limitations of God. Is He completely sovereign? If not, Why?

Did you ever hear of delegated authority? When a sovereign delegates authority to another, does he retain all his sovereignty, or does he surrender some of it? Is not even the Millennium delegated authority? And will it not end some day when the Son gives all authority over to the Father?

A certain cherub was created at one time and given dominion. He was made a covering cherub. God set him so (Eze 28:14).

When man was made and set in the garden in Eden he was given dominion (Ge 1:26).

Satan, the sum of wisdom and beauty, sinned with his eyes open. He was not deceived. His end is certain and there is no deviation from his judgment. Now his time is getting short and he is trying to squirm out of his predicament. He is trying to get sympathy by telling that God made him as he is. He is blaming God for all his troubles and misery.

Man is taking the cue from Satan and setting up the same sing-song. Man has made a mess of his dominion. Political, economic, religious, and social conditions are just what man has made them. Now he tries to blame God!

The one-talent servant tried to rationalize in the same manner. He blamed his failure on his master. But he was judged wicked and slothful nonetheless. He had to give an account.

When God will try to wake mankind up with judgments, men will only blaspheme and blame their miseries on Him even as they do now. They will not change. Does God intervene? Will He take back dominion some day? What think you?

We continue with the studies in Philippians. In 2:30 it is said that Epaphroditus had been nigh unto death because of the work of Christ. We do not know the details of how he risked his life for the work.

Chapter 3 starts out with the command to rejoice in the Lord. Verse 3 again speaks of those who rejoice in the Lord. They are the true circumcision, those who have no confidence in the flesh. In verse 7 Paul says that the things he once counted as gain, all his Jewish advantages, he now counts as refuse. He has a higher goal. It is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. This phrase tells us that the Anointed of the Lord, who humbled Himself, is now Paul's God. Paul is now out to win Christ.

Paul has discovered that there is no righteousness of the law, but only the righteousness of Christ the faithful One, and that it is gotten only thru faith.

Then in verse 12 he has discovered that he has been apprehended of Christ Jesus for a purpose. This is his election and predestination.

So Paul has a goal, the tape the runners touch at the end of the race. He is running for a prize. It is connected with the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In contrast to the running for a prize, there is mention in verse 18 of those who are not interested in a prize, they do not run, but they walk. And that walk makes them enemies of the cross of Christ. Now leave out the parenthesis and read verse 20 in connection with verse 17. Our citizenship is in heaven. It is from thence, not from this earth, that we look for the appearing of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 4 begins with the admonition to stand fast in the Lord. He begs of those who have differences to be of the same mind in the Lord. As in chapter 3, so here in verse 4 we are to rejoice in the Lord always, and he repeats it for emphasis. If one is not always rejoicing in the Lord, there is something wrong. In verse 5 we learn that the Lord is handy, right at the elbow. So requests can be made and the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding shall garrison our hearts and minds thru Christ Jesus.

The generosity of the Philippians has moved Paul to rejoice in the Lord. And it is thru this same Lord that Paul is confident that he can do all things (the things limited to his ministry is here understood). Then down in verse 19 Paul reminds them that God has plenty of riches and that He will supply all their need by Christ Jesus.

Paul sends his greetings to every saint in Christ Jesus. He never forgets anyone. He ends the epistle with the words, THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL. AMEN.

Now it would be interesting to go back over this epistle to the Philippians and count the references to Christ. The life of Paul was Christ-centered. What an example to the believer today!

And since this is written by the Holy Spirit, we can see that His witness, His subject, is ever the Christ.

THE JEW AND THE GENTILE

One of the reasons that the average believer does not read and study his Bible is because he has not taken the trouble to make any right division when it comes to the application of the Scriptures. Most of the Bible is addressed to persons or specific groups of persons. A good example can be found in Ge 3. There it will be seen that some words are addressed to the man, some are addressed to the woman, and some are addressed to the serpent. Most anybody would agree that it would be silly to mix these around so that what was said to the serpent was for the woman, or what was said to the woman was for the man. In the next chapter are some words addressed to Cain which are not for any of the 3 persons mentioned in chapter 3.

Later on, after the flood and the failure of the nations, God chose a nation for a special purpose. He had a great deal to say to that nation which could in no way be applied to the other nations. He gave this nation the law. It was not for the others. He gave them a promise of a Messiah. No Messiah was ever promised to the other nations. He gave them an inheritance in a certain promised land; Gentiles could not claim any of that.

When God did deal with the nations, it was plainly stated. There were some prophecies for Nebuchadnezzar and his people given by the prophet Daniel. It is so stated. Jonah had a message to Nineveh. It was not to Israel. What was said to Ahab and Jezebel was not to David and Bath-Sheba. I think you get the general idea of what we mean here by right division.

We have been speaking of the OT so far. But the same principle must also go thru the NT. Just as soon as we are careless about this matter, we get into confusion (which is nothing but ignorance) and find apparent contradictions in the Word. This is a place for carefulness.

Some of the epistles are written to Jewish believers only. It is well to find these and label them. For example, see James. Then some are written to both Jewish and Gentile believers. For example note Ro 2:17 and 11:24. And then there are some which were written to Gentiles only. These were written when the Jew was no longer counted as a Jew, being set aside for a season, and so today is just one of the nations; Gentiles. For example, see Eph 3:1 or Col 1:27.

Revelation is addressed to 7 Jewish churches of Asia minor. It is a summing up of prophecies relating to Israel; over 275 references being made to the same. To put Gentiles in where they are not specifically mentioned is going to end in confusion. Care must be taken.

It so happens that most of the readers of this paper are Gentiles. They have no part in the promise made to Abraham, the law given to Israel, the promise made to David, the millennium, the new Jerusalem, and many other things which pertain to Israel. And if there are any who read this who are children of Abraham, they have no part in any of these things today either. Israel are not God's people now.

So let no one judge you according to Israel's laws (Col 2:16-23). Believest thou this?

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #36

DENTON C. ABBEY

In last month's article was quoted the well-known verse from 1Co 15 about Christ being the firstfruits. Among other things, it says this, EACH IN HIS OWN ORDER. Now I am indebted to Mr. Baker for this thot, since he brot it up in class one evening.

What does it mean by EACH IN HIS OWN ORDER? The Greek Interlinear NT gives this as, EACH IN HIS OWN RANK. This gave pause for thot. So feeling that this needed a little more study, I looked up the word *order* in both the Greek concordance and the Greek dictionary.

Now the word *order* is used about 31 times in the NT, and it is the translation of the Greek *taxis*, *kathezees*, or *diatasso*, and is rendered in various places as, *order*, *command*, *appointed*, *will set*, *ordered*, etc.

However, in 1Co 15 we have an entirely new word. It is *tagma*. This is the only instance of it being used in the NT. Its Hebrew counterpart as used in 2Sa 23:13 means an *army* or *troops*. In Nu 2:2 it is translated as *standard*, EVERY MAN OF ISRAEL SHALL PITCH BY HIS OWN STANDARD. The dictionary gives the meaning of *tagma* as *body*, *corps*, or *a specific group*.

Now we usually think of *order* as meaning a progressive state, or a succession, and this is the thinking of a great many concerning 1Co 15. But in *tagma* we have a word that belies this thot and is not so translated in the Hebrew.

But, as Mr. Baker questioned in class, does this order in Corinthians mean that each man is to be raised in the sequence in which he died, or is he to be raised in a body or group of which he is a member? If we hold to the first and ignore the second, we then fully qualify for the sentence Paul gives in Heb 2:3, HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION? But if we heed the order to search the Scriptures, we will find that people are raised in a group according to their rank or calling. This will occur at the time of their particular resurrection.

And along with this same line, I would like to call your attention to Mr. Baker's article, "Four Future Spheres of Blessing" in the last issue of TFT. This deals with the same problem and gives the calling or hope of each group in the different resurrections.

This word *tagma* in 1Co 15 is just another bit of evidence among much that we have given in the past to prove that man is not immortal. He is promised life and is resurrected according to the plan and purpose of God. As Job said, he will await his appointed time. Salvation is not contingent upon works or dispensations. But your hope or calling is a result of God's choice of you as a believer. When you believe, He puts you in your proper rank, HAVING PREDESTINATED US UNTO THE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (placing as sons) BY JESUS CHRIST UNTO HIMSELF ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL (Eph 1:5).

We find a good example of what we mean in Re 20 where a group of overcomers is raised before the millennium, while the rest of the dead lived not again for a thousand years. These overcomers are a *tagma*, a group or corps of believers.

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

65. *How was Paul's baptism different from that of John the Baptist, and why did he baptize the converts at Ephesus over again (Ac 19:1-7)?*

Tradition has made verse 5 to refer to the 12 men at Ephesus when in reality it is a part of the quotation from Paul. Paul did not baptize them again. There was no need. John baptized unto repentance and in the name of Jesus. So did the 12 and Paul. What Paul did do was to put his hands on them and they received the gifts of the spirit. The apostles did likewise.

66. *Why do you keep on insisting that all in Adam will not be made alive or have a resurrection (1Co 15:22)?*

For the simple reason that all who are in Adam have only the old nature, the old man, the carnal nature, the Adamic nature, or any other name by which it is called. In the new heavens and new earth there would be no place for such. In these realms dwells righteousness only. All things in these realms are created new, so there can be no place for the old. Only those in Christ have the new nature, the new man, the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ, or any other name that may be used. Such have life and will be resurrected. They will be able to enjoy spiritual blessings in whatever sphere they may be. But those in Adam would never be able to enjoy spiritual blessings. Either the new earth or the new heavens would be hell to them, if I may use that word in its modern worldly usage. Those who are in Adam can never be reformed and made fit for the new creation. There must be a new creature, and when there is a new creature, then that person is no longer in Adam, but he is in Christ. What saith the Scriptures?

67. *Ezekiel 18:4 says, THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE. Now why do you say that children who have never yet sinned are lost? That people are born lost?*

Quoting a text out of context can bring up a host of questions, and this is one of them. You must read the first 9 verses of this chapter at least in order to get the context. You will note at the last of the passage it also says, HE THAT...HATH WALKED IN MY STATUTES...HE SHALL SURELY LIVE. The word *statutes* is the key to the passage. It refers to the law. Those who transgress shall surely die (that is, before their time). Those who keep the law shall live, (that is, have long life). Note the promise in the 5th commandment about long life to those who honor parents. This passage has nothing to do with salvation or eternal life as John uses it. The Word says that the law could not give life, but it does condemn the evil-doer. Ananias and Sapphira broke the law, they lied or bore false witness. They died under the law. People are born lost because they are in Adam; they have only the fleshly nature which in no way can please God, nor can it be subject to His law. Men are not punished for what Adam did. That is not why they are lost. They are lost because of what they are. They are dying from birth. Death is the natural end for everything that is not in Christ. Only in Him can man find incorruption and immortality. There is no other way.

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