STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #116

AND, YE MASTERS, DO THE SAME THINGS UNTO THEM, FORBEARING THREATENING; KNOWING THAT YOUR MASTER ALSO IS IN HEAVEN; NEITHER IS THERE RESPECT OF PERSONS WITH HIM.

Primarily this passage has to do with masters and slaves. Note that there is no inciting to revolution or riot here, but an acceptance of conditions as they are. Nothing is to be gained by revolt and violence, but the inworking of Christianity slowly, but surely, makes for a social reform. Human nature is never changed by force or law. There must be individual, personal conviction if social standards are to be raised. Many forget this.

Let us forget and boast of our civilization today, let us remember that there is probably more slavery in the world now than at any time in history. Human nature has not changed much.

For examples of relationship of slaves and masters in the Bible, look at the story of Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, and also read Paul’s epistle to Philemon. We must not forget the little slave girl who got the good news of the God of Israel to Naaman.

A Christian master was not to take advantage of his servants. He was not to threaten or mistreat them. They were a part of the household, a part of the family, and were to be treated as such. Christianity made a great change of these relationships in the Gentile homes. Among the Jews, it was not the same kind of slavery as among the Gentiles. A Jew could be bound out for service and subject to a master until the next Jubilee. Then all were free. But the exhortations here in Ephesians are for all cases.

Note the also. It means, THEIR MASTER AND YOURS IS IN HEAVEN. They have a common Master in this instance, and the realization of that fact could change attitudes.

But there is also application in this for us today. Any man who is hired out to work is a servant. Every man who is in business to serve the public is a servant. And those who hire people to work are also masters. Really then, every person is either a master or a servant. All too often masters and servants do not realize that they have interests in common. The servant often does not realize that his living and well-being depend on the success of the master’s business and that he has a responsibility in it. And oftentimes the master does not realize that his business could not go on without the work of the servants. Workers too often have a habit of grumbling about the work. Then they try to rob the masters by means of threatenings and strikes. This is just another form of holdup. And the master must not threaten either. That, too, can be a form of holdup.

There is such a thing as Christian economics. Christianity is workable in business, in spite of many who believe the contrary. And there is a possibility that Christianity might even work in politics. But it can only be worked by Christians. For unbelievers to try Christian principles in any field would be like Pharaoh trying to cross the Red Sea.

At first glance we might not just appreciate all that this expression means, and so it takes a little study of its occurrences and what they have to say to make us realize the richness of this simple statement.

Ephesians starts out with the assumption that all the faithful are in Christ Jesus. This is a guarantee of being made alive again some day. The opposite is being in Adam with resultant death (1Co 15:22). Upon birth, a person becomes a member of the family of Adam. Upon having the new creation put within, a person is in Christ, in another family of which He is Head.

All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are only for those in Christ. They are not promised to those in Adam, nor even to those in Abraham, just to those in Christ. And it goes on to say that those in Christ, the beloved, are acceptable before God. God so much as says, anyone who is a friend of My Son is a friend of Mine. And God so loves this Son of His that we can get most anything we want in the universe thru Him. If you doubt that statement, just look at the words, power, might, blessings, riches, citizenship, and the like. What more could you want?

It is in Christ that we have redemption, and the price was His precious blood. Would anything else have bought us? Would there have been enough silver and gold in the earth to have accomplished it? And if He bought us, then we are not really our own. We belong to Him, and to Him should be our service.

And in Christ, the Creator of all things, some day will all things be gathered together and He will be Head of all. That is the day when all things that offend will have been destroyed and all will be in Christ.

And it is in Christ that we have obtained an inheritance. No one has yet given an estimate of the value of this great estate. It is wealth beyond compare. He became poor that we might become rich. That is the result of trusting or hoping in Him.

And once one is in Christ, he is sealed there. Nothing can remove him. When Noah entered the ark, God closed the door, and in purpose if not in fact, God’s seal was on that door and even the devil himself could not have opened it.

There is an inevitable result of faith in the Lord Jesus; that is, love to all the saints. Every saint is praying for all saints. This is the edifying of the body, the strengthening of every part. It is the work of the saints.

A book should be written on the power that is to usward who believe, that power which was wrought in Christ when God raised Him from the dead. This is more than all the inventions of atomic power and the like. No invention yet put forth by man can raise the dead. Now what is this power that is in our hands?

We have just gotten thru the first chapter of Ephesians. Look beyond that. Note that we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; created unto good works in Christ Jesus. Note the seven times this expression occurs in Col 2:3-7. Now you take it up from here.
THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD #10

A lot of folks are worried sick. They fear that maybe God did create and place on the earth a being that could say NO to his Maker. They imagine that there is a race on between God and the devil. And they fear that the devil might get more people than God. There is nothing Scriptural about such a concept. And because they have imagined a vain thing, they then feel that they must put out the hand to steady the ark of God.

But what good would 98% of all people do Satan, even if he did get them? All such would be in Adam and therefore die. Satan cannot raise them, therefore they are just so much dust. Satan cannot compete with God.

But this concept is used in the reasoning of many who wish to by-pass God’s plan of salvation by grace thru faith. Like Cain, they want their own way. They have invented one, saying that surely God is going to save folks by some other way.

God’s sovereignty is not a ruthless force that would save each and every man against his will. God’s plan takes into account His righteousness and holiness. When He justifies the ungodly, He is still just. So His plan of salvation must come within the limits of His attributes, love, holiness, righteousness, and being just. How dare men accuse Him of being otherwise? Does Satan speak thru them?

A few, who have been taken in and brainwashed by the universal-salvation concept, have awakened and walked with Mary Magdalene, THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY THE LORD. And the reason is this; when they invent another way, then God’s way is discarded, and that way is Christ. So eventually they deny His deity and His office in behalf of mankind. They make fun of the Trinity calling it a three-headed God, and other such blasphemies.

One branch of the Universalists does not believe that man had a fall, and therefore none is lost. They do not want to be called Christians.

But the universal salvation concept was first established on the idea that man was immortal, that God had made a being He could not destroy. Orthodoxy took its teaching from the heathen that the wicked would be tortured forever since they could not be destroyed. This was repugnant to others and they put forth the idea that eventually in some way God would save all of them. They just could not realize that man could return to dust from which he was made.

God has a plan and purpose for the ages. He is testing His creatures here in this life to see if they can be used in His program. God can use the willing heart, however ignorant and poor it may be. But those who willfully go their own way, go into the discard. God cannot use such material in the work He is doing.

A part of our ministry is to warn folks of the snares. Beware of the three-fold lie; (1) God’s Word is not true, (2) Man does not actually die, (3) Man can become as great as God thru his own efforts. Sorry to have used so much space, but some have written that they were helped, so we rejoice.

HIS REST #1

The Lord God had commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel that He would bring them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians into a land flowing with milk and honey. It was necessary that they should hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord their God and observe and do all that He commanded them. In De 28:1-14 we find all the blessings that would be theirs if they obeyed. Verses 15-68, however, contain all the curses which would fall on them if they disobeyed. We know only too well what happened. The history of this nation has seen all the curses foretold fall on them in all their severity. It should make us fear and wonder. The final result of their disobedience would be that they would be removed from the land and scattered among the nations:

In turning aside from God’s plan of blessing to them (and thru them to the nations) they fell into the hands of Satan, the adversary of God, who is always seeking to draw people away from God. What would have happened if Israel had obeyed and received the blessings in all their fulness? In Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3 and 4 it is stated that they would ultimately have entered into His Rest. There were periods in their history when they took a step in the right direction and blessings came upon them, but these times never lasted long enough. Soon after they were redeemed from Egypt, they rebelled and the Lord eventually was unable to dwell among them.

Moses was told to remove the tabernacle outside the camp (Ex 33:7). Hitherto it had been pitched in the centre with the tribes camped around it, but now it was to be removed outside thus signifying that the Presence of God was removed from their midst, altho still near at hand. Because their hearts were not responsive, sacrifices and offerings were given as types and shadows of the true glories which could not then be revealed. Many years later the Lord said to Jeremiah, I SPOKE NOT unto YOUR FATHERS; NOR COMMANDED THEM IN THE DAY THAT I BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT CONCERNING BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES: BUT THIS THING I COMMANDED THEM, SAYING, OBEY MY VOICE, AND I WILL BE YOUR GOD (7:22). In Hosea 6:6 the Lord said, I DESIRED MERCY, AND NOT SACRIFICE; AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD MORE THAN BURNT OFFERINGS.

Those who left Egypt rebelled ten times against the Lord, and except for Caleb and Joshua, who remained true and faithful, all perished in the wilderness. Their children were obedient, however, and under Joshua eventually possessed the land and entered into a period of rest, AND THE LORD GAVE UNTO ISRAEL ALL THE LAND WHICH HE SWARE TO GIVE UNTO THEIR FATHERS: AND THEY POSSESSED IT AND DWELT THEREIN, AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST ROUND-ABOUT. ACCORDING TO ALL THAT HE SWARE UNTO THEIR FATHERS (Jos 21:43, also 1:13-15; 22:4; 23:1).
THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

This is a title that many give to Acts, or a part of Acts, trying to prove that the dispensation of the mystery came in gradually. But the words transition or transitional are not to be found in the Word. If there is any transition at all, it would be found only in John's gospel and the last 4 verses of Acts. Acts 28:28 says that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles at that point. No dispensation is indicated nor is there anything about how God is going to deal with these Gentiles. John's gospel tells us that after being rejected by His own, as many as receive the Lord become children. But in what capacity they become children and what their future is outside of resurrection, there is no mention. Certainly this cannot be called transitional.

On the other hand, the book of Acts and the epistles written during its time period, are completed by the Revelation. The last 7 letters written by Paul do not link these or add any pertinent information. They have another subject. So, as far as Israel and the kingdom are concerned, you can take away John, Paul's last 7 epistles, and the last 4 verses of Acts, and yet you have a complete Bible. As far as prophetic times are concerned, you have not lost a thing by omitting these portions.

The revelation of the dispensation of the mystery in no way adds to or completes the Acts. Neither does Acts or any epistles written during its time period add to or complete the great secret that was hid in God from ages and generations. And as far as Christendom is concerned, you could cut the above portions out of the Bible and they would never miss them. They know nothing about the mystery nor even how that God deals with Gentile nations today. All they know is the kingdom and the sermon on the mount.

But somebody is sure to say that the Ephesian temple is built up from some Roman stones. That is true, but examine every one of those Roman stones and you will not find a dispensational mark on one of them. And what truth do you find in Romans that is not built on the OT?

And somebody will say that Paul had 2 ministries, as recorded in Acts 26. That is true, but that very passage says that Paul was not disobedient and had at that time fulfilled the 2 ministries given to him. Neither one had to do with the dispensation of the mystery.

Furthermore, instead of there being a transition period to prepare people for the mystery, there was a thing by omitting these portions. See Eph 4:12 where perfecting is sending or adjusting, a medical term.

Paul's first work in Acts was to proclaim the kingdom to the Jews of the dispersion. His second work was to graft in Gentile proselytes in the various assemblies to provoke the Jews of the dispersion to emulation or jealousy, just as Peter had done beforehand in the house of Cornelius. The gifts and signs followed this ministry right up to the last chapter of Acts.

There is no transition period for the simple reason that there was no transition.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #45

As I mentioned in last month's article, we must not base our whole stand on one verse of Scripture. So come let us reason together (Isa 1:18).

Take our old favorite that we mentioned in articles 20 to 23, We are confident, I say and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Now this verse is used over and over again by many, to prove that man goes direct to heaven upon death. I have heard it time and again at funerals. I will admit that it sounds factual, and is a very comforting thought. I will also admit that it may be a distinct possibility in a few isolated cases. But can we take this phrase and apply it to all humanity? If so, then what are we going to do with verses such as these that follow?

For the Lord shall descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1Th 4:16). Or; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question (Ac 23:6). Or; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some (2Ti 2:18). Or; but the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection (Re 20:5). Or; --that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living (Ro 14:9). Or; why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? (Ac 26:8). Or; --David, that he is both dead and buried.--(Ac 2:29). Or; marvelous not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice (Joh 5:28). Or; --He hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead (Ps 143:3). Or; many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake (Da 12:2). Or; Lazarus is dead.-- (Joh 11:14).

Now I could add to this list until the page is full and no room left for explanation. So we will present these as evidence. Which are your going to believe, one verse of doubtful interpretation or verse after verse of direct quotes as I have given above? Choose you this day.-- (Jos 24:15).

Now it is on this very point of evidence that we make our stand on all issues; what does the Scripture say in total reference to any subject? Even if we feel that one verse indicates some specific doctrine, I hesitate to accept it if a dozen other verses are contrary. Either our understanding is incomplete on the point, or it is purposely obscured by God. I am sure that He has not told us all His plans. Tho He has hinted at many, we still are in the dark and must accept those things which we do not understand. But let us not prognosticate, interpolate and expostulate on one verse to the detriment of the whole Scripture.

And so this illustration given above is our method of determining truth in all cases of questionable interpretation. This is how I arrived at all the conclusions concerning those verses listed in article 15.

We recommend you to the explanation of the others as listed in articles 15 to 34.
101. You seem to think that Satan is the author of all sin, but does not God create evil? (Isa 45:7).

Just who said that sin and evil are the same thing? Note in that same verse that there is a contrast of light and darkness. God formed light and created (brought about) darkness. Then note the next contrast. God makes peace and creates (brings about) evil. Evil there must mean disturbance since it is the opposite of peace. There is nothing about sin in this verse. Look at Isa 47:11. Because of the sins enumerated before, evil will come upon the sinners. It is not sin that comes upon them. It would be well for the reader to look up the usage of the word evil a little farther and see if it ever means sin, and if so, who is the author.

102. Does not Ac 13:46 indicate that there must be works or worth to obtain everlasting life?

Several times in the past we have brought to the attention of our readers that everlasting life as a present possession and a guarantee of resurrection is used that way only by John. In all other places it means a reward in the life to come, that is, on the other side of resurrection. Much confusion has arisen because this distinction has not been made. So here the Jews are told that since they oppose themselves to the truth of the gospel, they have judged themselves unworthy of reward in the life to come. The question of their salvation does not come up. Therefore we cannot judge that.

103. What does 1Co 15:29 mean?

For centuries commentators and teachers have wrestled with this problem and they have come up with 30 or more explanations. If you have access to Bengel’s Gnomon, Lightfoot’s works, or the Student Commentary by Williams, it might be well to read what they have to say about the problem. But there seems to be an agreement that the verse follows verse 19. The intervening material being a parenthesis. Also verses 31 and 32 must be considered. With all this in mind we then would submit the following as an explanation, not as a translation, for no one seems to be too familiar with the Greek idiom. *What shall they do who witness (martyr) unto death (identify themselves with those who have died for the witness), if these dead ones never rise? Why should they witness unto a martyrdom by death? And why should we endanger our lives every hour? I die daily in that I endanger my life for the gospel. And what would be the advantage of all my sufferings if the dead rise not?* Now look at verse 19 again. This is a difficult passage, but I believe that this is the meaning of it if we are to keep it in its context. But you be the judge.

104. On what day of the week did the crucifixion occur?

First of all read appendix 156 in the Companion Bible. This shows that without doubt Wednesday was the day in that particular year when our Lord was crucified. No other day will fit the circumstances. Both Thursday and Saturday were Sabbaths. Study this for yourself.