

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

LESSON ONE

Note first the following verses in this Epistle:

Ephesians 3:1

“For this cause I Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you GENTILES.”

Ephesians 2:11 to 13

“Wherefore remember, that you being in time past GENTILES in the flesh. who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made with hands That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Ephesians 3:6 and 8

“That the GENTILES should be fellow heirs and of the same Body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel,”

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the GENTILES the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:17 and 18.

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other GENTILES walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

While it is true that in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, yet the Epistle to the Ephesians contains a very definite message to Gentile saints; to those who had been Gentile sinners. It is interesting to note in Matthew 15:21 to 26 the great difference between Jews and Gentiles and the “no” difference in Romans 10:12 and Ephesians 2:13 to 17. Ephesians is addressed to the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:1. Unlike some of Paul’s other Epistles, Ephesians does not deal specifically with the local assembly at Ephesus, but rather with the Body of Christ and the members of that Body. Some authorities say that Ephesus does not appear in some of the original manuscripts.

Note one of the principal reasons why Paul was led by the Holy Spirit to write this profound and Divine message:

Ephesians 4:14.

“That ye henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and whereby they lie in wait to deceive”

In this connection let us study carefully I Corinthians 13:10 and 11—Hebrews 5:12 to Hebrews 6:1. Compare the verses in Hebrews with some statements of Paul’s to the Corinthians:

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; But when I became a man, I put away childish things.” I Corinthians 13:10 and 11.

“Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” I Corinthians 12:2.

“And I, brethren, would not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” I Corinthians 3:1 to 3.

Now note:

Hebrews 5:12 to 6:1:

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”

By carefully studying and comparing Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians with Ephesians we learn that most of the Corinthian Epistle is Divine truth for babes in Christ, while much in Ephesians is the Holy Spirit’s strong meat for those who are of full age and to be received by members of the Body of Christ and taught by the pastors and teachers:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13.

This statement itself is “meat diet.”

If I Corinthians 2:14 is true, concerning the understanding of the milk of the Word, how much more so if saints are to understand the strong meat of Ephesians. Read that verse as to how Divine truth is spiritually discerned and then to understand the deep truth of Ephesians, note the Divine method in Ephesians 1:17 and 18:

“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

Note Paul’s second prayer in Ephesians 3:16 to 19: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Thus we see that more than ordinary spiritual discernment is necessary for the comprehension of the deeper truth of Ephesians.

As a foundation, the student of Ephesians should first understand Galatians and Romans and he should by all means study carefully with Ephesians, the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, and also II Timothy:

But note here Ephesians 1:1 and 5:3: “TO THE SAINTS”—“AS BECOMETH SAINTS”.

The Epistle to the Ephesians plainly tells how sinners become saints and how they are then to behave as becometh saints. Sinners do not become saints by behaving, but by believing. Then as believers they are to behave as becometh saints.

A saint is a saved person. “By the which will we are sanctified by the offering of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:10. Read also Hebrews 13:12 and Hebrews 10:14.

Note carefully II Thessalonians 2:13, that the believer is chosen unto salvation by sanctification. Then read I Corinthians 6:9 to 11 and see that sanctification precedes justification. But there is also a sanctification that follows.

LESSON TWO

GOD’S WORKMANSHIP CREATED UNTO GOOD WORKS

Sinners are made saints by God’s grace, by God “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10.

God’s workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. Unto good works. This is the Divine order. God’s workmanship. Then God’s workmen.

Compare with Ephesians 2:9 “Not OF works, lest any man should boast.” There is a great difference between OF good works, a contributing factor, and UNTO good works, the fruit and evidence of salvation. No sinner’s works in any way help to save him. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8.

The particular sinners referred to in Ephesians 2:1 to 10 were Gentiles who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Note their history, what they were before becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus:

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” Ephesians 2:2 and 3.

“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” Ephesians 4:18.

Then carefully note the “BUT GOD” in Ephesians 2:4 and the “BUT NOW” in Ephesians 2:13. “But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us.” “But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off were made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Thus we see the human material out of which God made saints—and still makes saints—and the Divine process by which these sinners were made saints. Because of the grace, the rich mercy and great love of God and because of the power, and value, and efficacy of the precious

shed blood of the Son of God a supernatural transformation took place; dead sinners were made living saints.

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:6 to 8.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God.” Ephesians 2:19.

“For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8.

Made alive. Raised up and seated in the heavenlies. Saved. No longer afar off. Members of the Body of Christ. In the light. All by the infinite grace of God and by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Ephesians 4:24.

SAVED AND SEALED

Then note:

Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30:

“In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.”

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

“After that ye believed”, in the Greek, is one word, “PISTEUSANTES”. The word is “BELIEVING” or “On believing” the gospel of salvation the believer is sealed unto the day of redemption; that is, until the day, hour, and moment that the dead in Christ and those who are alive rise in glorified bodies to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

So then the believing sinner:

Is saved,

Is sainted (sanctified),

Is sealed,

Is seated in the heavenlies,

Is secure.

All of the spiritual blessings and benefits guaranteed to the believer are summed up in the one statement:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3.

Blessed with ALL spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

Note also Ephesians 3:20: “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” God is able. Note God’s ability and His mighty power in this verse and in Ephesians 1:19 and 20: “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His

mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.”

The redemption of the believing sinner is according to the riches of God’s grace. Ephesians 1:7. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. There is no limit to God’s grace and God’s power.

So we see that the blessings of the believer are according to the mighty power of God and according to the riches of God’s grace. What human being can estimate the mighty power of God or the riches of God’s grace? Surely we all believe and know that God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. This power is toward us. Ephesians 1:19. This power worketh in us. Ephesians 3:20.

When the believer believes the glorious truth of Ephesians and realizes what God guarantees him in Christ, he will surely not seek for more power by resorting to some fantastical religious scheme. Neither will he be looking for a second blessing when he knows the truth of Ephesians 1:3.

“All blessings (in the heavenlies)”, “All power”—and according to II Corinthians 9:8; “all grace”. And God is the God of all grace. I Peter 5:10.

LESSON THREE

GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE

God’s eternal purpose. The Epistle to the Ephesians tells us of God’s eternal purpose. The message and program of Ephesians is according to that Divine purpose. Note Ephesians 3:11:

“ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL PURPOSE WHICH HE PURPOSED IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

Before we study the eternal purpose in Ephesians let us see how it is stated in Romans 8:28 to 32—II Timothy 1:9 and 10—Romans 16:25—I Corinthians 2:7 and 8.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:28 to 32.

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” II Timothy 1:9 and 10.

“Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.” Romans 16:25.

“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it. they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” I Corinthians 2:7 and 8.

Here we learn the fallacy of teaching that God’s eternal purpose, His mystery or secret, was not made known to the apostle Paul until after the “Acts” period closed, for Corinthians and Romans were written during the “Acts” period. But we know that there is no clear statement concerning this blessed truth, explaining the mystery, until we come to Paul’s prison Epistles.

Note in Romans 8:28: According to God’s purpose, He foreknew and predestinated:

Note in II Timothy 1:9, according to God’s eternal purpose, grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

Note in I Corinthians 2:7 and 8, this was ordained to our glory before the world began.

Note in Romans 16:25, the preaching of Paul’s gospel, according to the revelation of the mystery, was kept secret since before the world began.

Thus we have the light from other Scriptures on the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus. God purposed this before the world began: God kept His eternal purpose a secret. The risen Lord revealed it to Paul by revelation. It is called “the mystery of God’s will.” (Ephesians 1:9). “The mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19 and 20). This eternal purpose of God concerning the members of the Body of Christ and His dispensation of grace was not made known to the sons of men in other ages:

Colossians 1:25 and 26.

“Whereof I Paul am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill (complete) the Word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints.”

God predestinated this Divine economy, purpose and program, but He did not permit His Old Testament servants to prophesy it. He did not even disclose it to them. Therefore, it is called “THE MYSTERY” in Ephesians.

Note:

Ephesians 3:8:

“Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles “THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST”.

Here the Holy Spirit refers to “the mystery of God’s will”, “the mystery of the gospel”, “the eternal purpose of God”, as “THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.” The Greek root of the word “unsearchable” is a word meaning “step” or “track.” Therefore the word means “UNTRACEABLE” or “CANNOT BE TRACKED”.

By way of contrast note truth concerning Christ that could be tracked:

Acts 17:11.

“These were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

The Bereans could confirm or refute Paul’s message of Christ by searching the Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi, but no one could confirm or deny the “MYSTERY” truth of Ephesians by diligently studying the Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi, because all of the faithful servants

of the Lord who wrote those inspired messages were both silent and ignorant concerning the unrevealed mystery, later made known to Paul. Peter and the eleven who were associated with Jesus of Nazareth during His earthly ministry, could throw no light on the subject. They remembered John 16:12 and 13: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." But what they learned of the new dispensation of grace, the new commission, and the spiritual program for members of the Body of Christ, they learned from Paul. Now note Paul's words:

Ephesians 1:9 and 11

"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself:

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him."

Here we learn that the mystery of God's will was according to God's pleasure and purpose. But note that God had now made it known. It therefore should no longer be a secret. The secret has been told. The mystery has been disclosed. Members of Christ's Body, predestinated according to God's purpose, are to constitute "One New Man", Ephesians 2:15.

THE PROPHESED KINGDOM NOT THE BODY

We learn from these Scriptures and others that God's eternal purpose is His predestinated purpose and "grace" program, that purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. All of this differs from God's prophetic "kingdom of heaven" program. Note in Mark 1:15 that the prophesied kingdom was at hand because the time was fulfilled; the King had come to the kingdom nation. But when the apostle Paul made known the eternal purpose of God he did not say, "the time is fulfilled", because there was no such fulfillment in connection with God's unprophesied "grace" program. During this age the prophesied kingdom of Christ is in abeyance. There has been an interruption or suspension of God's kingdom covenants. The kingdom of heaven that was at hand when Christ was here as Jesus of Nazareth in the land of the Jews has been postponed. The kingdom of the Son of God's love, in Colossians 1:12 to 14, is not the same kingdom of the Son of man mentioned in Matthew 25:31 to 44. That prophesied kingdom shall surely be established on the earth when Christ, the Son of man, comes to earth as King.

Yes, "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." II Peter 1:19. The Son of man is coming back to earth. "And He shall send Jesus Christ, Which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:20 and 21.

Jesus Christ is coming back to earth from heaven to bring about the restitution of all things. All of God's prophets, from the very beginning of prophets, foretold this Divine kingdom. Note I Peter 1:11: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, foretelling Christ's death on the cross

and His kingdom glory on earth. They did not know that there would be a long parenthetical period between the sufferings and the glory of the Messiah. None of these prophets said anything or knew anything concerning the heavenly position, and possessions of members of Christ's Body during this grace parenthetical age, or concerning the present ministry of the risen Christ. Therefore this unprophesied economy is called "the dispensation of the mystery" or "the administration of the secret." The truth concerning this economy is called "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—"the mystery of God's will"—"the mystery of the gospel."

Note how Paul states this:

Colossians 1:24 to 26:

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill (complete) the Word of God; Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints."

Here we read that the mystery was not in fulfillment of the Word of God but to "fill up" or "complete" the Word of God. Thus, in rightly dividing the Word of Truth, we must know the difference between the hope, calling, and sphere of blessing for saints in the PROPHESED KINGDOM of Christ and the hope, calling and sphere of blessing for saints in the UNPROPHESED, PREDESTINATED Body of Christ.

Compare the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:17 and 18 with the words of Paul in Colossians 1:24 to 26, and see the difference between events which fulfilled the prophets and those which completed the Word of God.

LESSON FOUR

THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

Let us compare and contrast the gospel in Ephesians 1:13 and the gospel in Ephesians 6:19 and 20:

Ephesians 1:13.

"In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION; in Whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."

Ephesians 6:19 and 20

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL. For which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Now let us carefully consider:

I Corinthians 15:1 to 4

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all

that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Galatians 1:9

“As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

Here we read of God’s saving message, the fact of the death, the burial and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us keep in mind that all of this was “according to the Scriptures”. This is stated also in:

Acts 13:29 and 30:

“And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead.”

And God’s Word is very clear, that if any one preaches any other gospel for the sinner’s salvation, let him be anathema. So to the sinner the servant of God is to preach the prophesied gospel or suffer the consequences. No one can be saved except by faith in Christ and His redemptive work.

But if God’s servants are to understand the “strong meat” of Ephesians, they must believe and know that the apostle Paul was not in the jail at Rome for proclaiming the prophesied gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4; but for proclaiming “the unsearchable riches of Christ”, for making others to see “the dispensation of the mystery” which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. Ephesians 3:8 to 9.

There is a difference between “the gospel” of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 and “the mystery of the gospel” for which Paul was the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel’s prophets foretold the sufferings and the glory of Christ. I Peter 1:10 to 12. They foretold His death and resurrection and His coming glorious reign on David’s throne. Isaiah 9:6 and 7.

But the dispensation and message for which Paul suffered as an evildoer (II Timothy 2:8 and 9) was hid from ages and from generations. Colossians 1:26.

DIFFERENT GOSPELS

Note Matthew 9:35—Acts 20:24—Ephesians 6:19 and 20:

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching “THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM” and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. Matthew 9:35.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify “THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.” Acts 20:24.

“And for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known “THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL”, For which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly.” Ephesians 6:19 and 20.

Jesus of Nazareth on earth was presenting Himself to Israel as King as well as Saviour while many individual Jews received Him as their individual Saviour and were saved. Note Acts 13:23: “Of this man’s seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.” The Record is, “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” John 1:11. This was not only true in His incarnation but in His resurrection. Note Acts 5:30 and 31: “The God of

our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

When the gospel of the kingdom was preached David’s throne and the nation Israel were in view. Not only did Christ and the twelve apostles preach a saving message to individual Jews, but they proclaimed the presence of the KING and His Kingdom at hand for the KINGDOM nation. Compare Matthew 10:5 to 8 and Luke 9:6 with Luke 18:31 to 34.

“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:5 to 8.

“And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.” Luke 9:6

“Then He, took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge Him and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” Luke 18:31 to 34.

Carefully note what the apostles did not know and understand.

Here we learn that Peter and the Eleven were sent to Israel—not to Gentiles—to proclaim the kingdom gospel, to heal and perform miracles. They obeyed and had great success. But after preaching the gospel of the kingdom for two years they did not know the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4 that Christ was to die for our sins, be buried and raised again. It is true that in Luke 24:21 to 26 the risen Christ called them fools for not knowing the prophesied truth; but the statement in Luke 18:34 is: “And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.” This was after they had preached the gospel for many months. What gospel? Not the gospel of I Corinthians 15:1 to 4, not the gospel of Acts 20:24. Note again Acts 20:24: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24.

With this, note Titus 2:11: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” What a difference! In Matthew 10:5 to 8 the kingdom of heaven was at hand for Israel but not for Gentiles. But in Acts 20:24 the grace of God is at hand for all men. Note the gospel of grace in Romans 3:24 and in Ephesians 2:8 and 9:

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:24.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8 and 9.

Compare this gospel of grace with Christ’s message in Luke 13:24 and Peter’s message to Cornelius in Acts 10:34 and 35:

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Luke 13:24.

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.” Acts 10:34 and 35.

There is quite a difference.

Again compare Matthew 24:13 and 14 with Romans 4:3 and 4:

“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:13 and 14.

“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”

Then read Romans 4:5, “to him that worketh not, but believeth.”

Which gospel do you prefer? Certainly if the anathema of God is on the servant of God who preaches another gospel to the lost sinner in this day of grace, that curse is upon the messenger who substitutes the gospel of the kingdom for the gospel of the grace of God, or who perverts the gospel of the grace of God by mixing it with the gospel of the kingdom. Even the babe in Christ should know the difference between Peter’s message to Cornelius and Paul’s message in Romans 4:4 and 5 and Titus 3:3 to 8. Open your Bible and compare them.

How about Galatians 2:7?

“BUT CONTRARIWISE, WHEN THEY SAW THAT THE GOSPEL OF THE UNCIRCUMCISION WAS COMMITTED UNTO ME; AS THE GOSPEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION WAS UNTO PETER.”

Think of the man who claims to be God’s Bible teacher, teaching that there is no difference between “the gospel of the circumcision” and “the gospel of the uncircumcision.” Surely they have forgotten that Genesis 15:4 to 6—Genesis 17:3 to 18—Acts 7:8—Romans 4:6 to 12—Galatians 3:8, are in the Bible. Galatians 2:7 means far more than the fact that Peter was preaching to the Jews and that Paul was presenting the same Divine program to the Gentiles.

Note the decision of James, Peter and John and Paul in Acts 15:19—Acts 21:25—Galatians 2:9: “Wherefore, my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles, are turned to God.” Acts 15:19.

“As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.” Acts 21:25.

“And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” Galatians 2:9.

Were all of these men out of the will of God? During the Acts period was there not one order for the believing Jews and another order for the believing Gentiles? Were Peter, James, and John out of the will of God when they agreed with Paul that they would go to the Jews when the resurrected Christ told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? Mark 16:14 to 18. They most assuredly were if the risen Christ did not give to Paul a new commission different from Matthew 28:19 and 20 and thereby bring in a new dispensation. Note carefully Acts 13:2, II Corinthians 5:18 to 21, Galatians 1:11 and 12.

Why is it that we find in the Book of Acts the record of three or four missionary journeys by Paul but no record of any missionary journeys by Peter or his fellow-apostles? In Acts 8:1, we learn that the Twelve remained in Jerusalem. When Peter preached to the children of the covenant, the covenant of circumcision had not been abrogated. Acts 3:22 to 26—Acts 7:8—Acts 5:29 to 32—Acts 10:28.

At least fourteen years after Paul was converted he went by Divine revelation to Jerusalem to tell Peter and the Eleven of the gospel of the uncircumcision which Paul received

by revelation. Galatians 2:1 to 5. There was no thought of the gospel of the uncircumcision in the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20. Note Peter's words concerning Paul and his messages:

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.” II Peter 3:15 and 16.

If the twelve apostles had to learn from Paul what the gospel of the uncircumcision was, are we to assume or presume that they learned what was “the mystery of the gospel” until they first heard it from the special ambassador of Christ to whom it was revealed?

Let us be assured that Paul was not in the Roman prison for preaching any message that Peter had either preached or heard until after it had been revealed to Paul. Paul was in jail for “the mystery of the gospel”. Ephesians 6:19 and 20. If Paul had done what most Christian preachers today claim that he did, he would never have been in jail for “the mystery”. They claim that Paul continued to proclaim the same message that the twelve apostles had been preaching. If they would do a little prayerful, careful thinking, they would decide that if this had been true, some of the other apostles would have been in jail for the mystery. They all preached I Corinthians 15:1 to 4. but the mystery of the gospel was different.

To be sure, Paul did proclaim a CONFIRMATION” message, preaching many of the prophesied truths that Peter and the Eleven preached, but Paul in addition, had a distinctive “REVELATION” ministry, which Christ did not command the Twelve to preach, either while He was on earth or in the chapters of Acts in which their work is recorded. They agreed to go to the circumcision years after the Pentecost of Acts 2, years after Peter had preached to the one company of Gentiles Acts Galatians 2:9. Note carefully that after Paul received his commission in Acts 13:2 there is no record of the activities of the Twelve in the Book of Acts, except as they had dealings with Paul.

After this we learn in Acts 21:18 to Acts 22:21, that James had access to the Jewish services in Jerusalem, whereas the same Jews tried to tear Paul into pieces when he even visited Jerusalem and entered their temple. Read these verses and ask yourself the question, why did they want to kill Paul and not harm James twenty-five years after the death of Christ, if Paul and James were carrying on the same spiritual program? How will you answer your own question? By saying, “they were not”; “I have been mistaken”.

So we see that Paul was in the Roman jail for preaching something that the Twelve had not preached.

THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

The word “gospel” is a comprehensive word referring to many spiritual benefits and blessings for saints as well as the saving message for sinners. The word means “good news” and is also translated “glad tidings”. Every spiritual, intelligent student of the Scripture, knows the difference between the glad tidings of the kingdom and the good news called “the gospel of the grace of God.” Many ungracious remarks would never have been uttered, many bitter, unprofitable controversies would have been avoided had these same spiritual, intelligent students of the Scriptures earnestly prayed the prayer of Ephesians 1:16 and 17, and learned in this way

the difference between the gospel whereby the sinner is saved (I Corinthians 15:1 to 4) and the gospel for the saint as revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, “the mystery of the gospel”.

Perhaps the pastors and teachers are somewhat responsible for the appalling ignorance of this most blessed truth for saints in all the Bible. They are expected to be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God. I Corinthians 4:1 to 3. They are to obey Ephesians 3:9, to “make all men see the dispensation of the mystery.” God has made known “the mystery of His will”—His predestinated eternal purpose in Christ Jesus concerning the heavenly position, blessings and conflict of members of the Body of Christ, identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, seated-with Him far above principalities and powers and dominions. Ephesians 1:9. The Lord’s servants are to pray for open doors and open, mouths for the proclamation of this glorious message. Note:

Colossians 4:3 and 4:

“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.”

And:

Ephesians 6:19 and 20

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the, gospel. For which I am an ambassador in bonds that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Some men preach that Jews and Gentiles are now in the same Body and think they have proclaimed the mystery. It is true that the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6 is one aspect of the great mystery, but there is so much beside that. Surely it should not require the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, mentioned in Ephesians 1:17 and 18, to know that believing Jews and Gentiles were baptized in one Spirit in one Body. The carnal babes of Corinth knew that much. But for those of full age God, by the Holy Spirit, would give them much more knowledge concerning His eternal purpose during this grace period when He is edifying the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:13 and 14.

LESSON FIVE

RECONCILED BOTH UNTO GOD IN ONE BODY

Ephesians 2:14 to 16

“For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain One New Man, so making peace; And that He might reconcile both unto God in one Body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”

The doctrine of reconciliation is one of the, most interesting studies in the Bible. It is first mentioned in connection with Paul's ministry in Romans 5:10 to 12—II Corinthians 5:17 and 18 and Romans 11:15:

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through, our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world; and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 5:10 to 12,

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” II Corinthians 5:17 and 18.

“For if the casting away of them (the Jews) be the reconciling of the world,” Romans 11:15.

Note first in Romans 5:11 and 12, “RECONCILIATION—WHEREFORE AS BY ADAM”. Here we note that Adam is mentioned in connection with reconciliation. Then in II Corinthians 5:17 and 18 we observe that the new creature is identified with the ministry of reconciliation, as we observe in Romans 6:1 to 15 and II Corinthians 5:13 to 16, that the believer is identified with Christ because of his reconciliation. Therefore, in God's Word, the new creation, identification and reconciliation are linked together.

On earth Jesus Christ was the minister of the circumcision. Romans 15:8. Note Matthew 1:1: “The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” He was sent to Israel. Matthew 15:24 and Acts 13:23. Jesus Christ called the Jews, “the children of the kingdom”. Matthew 8:11 and 12. He called the Gentiles, “dogs”. Matthew 15:25 and 26. At that time God had not broken down the middle wall of partition between them:

Ephesians 2:11 to 13:

“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh made with hands. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Note the contrast “at that time”, “but now”. The children of the kingdom were to be cast into outer darkness and the Gentiles were to be brought in. Matthew 8:11 and 12. Note Christ's words to the children of the kingdom and their reply:

“I know that ye are Abraham's seed but ye seek to kill me, because My Word hath no place in you” “They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham” John 8:37 and 39.

Now note the judgment which Christ pronounced upon the children of the kingdom:

“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Matthew 23:33 and 39.

“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Matthew 21:43.

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” Luke 21:20.

Note very carefully just when Israel’s desolation was to take place. When armies compassed Jerusalem. Had the armies compassed Jerusalem when twelve apostles stood up on the Jewish feast day in the Jewish city and addressed devout Jews from every nation all the house of Israel? Acts 2:5 and 36. Certainly not. Therefore Israel’s desolation had not taken place when Peter and the Eleven preached to Israel on the day of Pentecost.

What meaneth the warning of Paul in Acts 13:40 and 41, if the kingdom nation had been set aside? Note these verses:

“Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

It is true that the Lord Jesus called the children of the kingdom, “serpents” and “a generation of vipers” in Matthew 23:33, but some months later they were addressed in words of tenderness and grace . Read:

Acts 3:15, 17, 25 and 26:

“And killed the Prince of life, Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”

“And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.”

“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from His iniquities.”

We would emphasize the words “UNTO YOU FIRST”. Unto whom? The children of the prophets and the covenant, the seed of Abraham. Nothing here for the other children of Adam, except for the proselytes of Acts 2:10. It was unlawful for the apostles to go to the Gentiles. Acts 10:28. First the children of the kingdom with their rulers must be given the opportunity to receive the resurrected Messiah, or commit the unpardonable sin against the witness of the Holy Spirit. Note carefully:

Acts 5:29 to 32:

“Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance TO ISRAEL, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him.”

In this connection read in Matthew 12:31 and 32 the Lord’s statement of Israel’s pardonable sin and their unpardonable sin: “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoso speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

Then note Matthew 26:24 and Luke 23:34:

“The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had never been born.” “Then said Jesus,

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment and cast lots.”

Never lose the full meaning and efficacy of this prayer of Christ on the cross.

Then note Acts 2:23—Acts 3:18—Acts 4:27 and 28.

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” “But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.” “For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.”

The Son of man had to go. His death was foreordained, predestinated and prophesied. He was delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. His death was inevitable, therefore the sin of Israel against the Son of man was pardonable.

But note, in Acts 13:45 and 46, and in Acts 18:5 and 6, their unpardonable sin and then what happened:

“But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, **LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES.**”

“And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.”

The story is told in Romans 11:30 and 15:

“For as ye in times past have not believed God, ye have now obtained mercy through their unbelief.” “For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”

What do we learn from these Scriptures? We most assuredly learn that Israel was not set aside before Pentecost. We learn that the kingdom of God was not taken away from Israel suddenly before Christ’s death but gradually during the period covered by the Book of Acts. We learn that the children of the kingdom were not cast aside into the outer darkness until after Paul received his new commission in Acts 13:2. We learn that reconciliation was sent to Gentiles when and because Israel blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, because they would not repent when the Holy Spirit witnessed of the resurrection of the Son of man, Whom Stephen saw standing at the right hand of God. When and because they put the Word of God from them and committed the unpardonable sin, Paul said, “**LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES**”. It was then that reconciliation was sent to Gentiles.

Therefore we learn that we are not to understand from Ephesians 2:15 to 18, that reconciliation for the Gentiles began at the time Christ died on the cross. The “far off” of Acts 2:39 referred to the dispersion, the scattered Israelites. Daniel 9:6 to 8.

Note again the ministry of the twelve apostles before and after the Lord Jesus committed unto Paul the ministry of reconciliation:

“**AND WHEN JAMES, PETER AND JOHN, WHO SEEMED TO BE PILLARS, PERCEIVED THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN UNTO ME. THEY GAVE TO ME AND**

BARNABAS THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP; THAT WE SHOULD GO UNTO THE HEATHEN, AND THEY UNTO THE CIRCUMCISION.” Galatians 2:9.

A. wonderful story is told us in the thirteenth chapter of Acts. Note verse 12:

“THEN THE DEPUTY, WHEN HE SAW WHAT WAS DONE, BELIEVED, BEING ASTONISHED AT THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD.”:

Sergius, Paulus, the Gentile, saw the miracle of blindness upon the Jew and believed unto salvation. The Jew was Barjesus. This means “the child of Jehovah Saviour”. The nation Israel was the child of Jehovah Saviour, created for God’s own glory. Romans 9:4 to 6. This was, a dispensational miracle. Note:

Romans 11:7 and 8:25:

“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.”
“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

Israel’s blindness brought blessing to the Gentiles, the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, inasmuch as the message of reconciliation and the new dispensation did not begin before the thirteenth of Acts, we should not go to the other side of that chapter for our marching orders. So far as we are concerned, in this day of grace, the commission of II Corinthians 5:18 to 21, is a greater “Great Commission” than is the commission to the twelve apostles, in Matthew 28:19 and 20.

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ was inevitable. He said, “For this cause came I unto this hour.” John 12:27 to 31. Note Hebrews 2:9 and I Peter 1:18 to 20. Because of this fact and because of Christ’s prayer for Israel on the cross (Luke 23:34) Israel was given the opportunity to receive the resurrected Christ. But the rulers refused. They sinned and blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:45 and Acts 18:5. Then Paul was sent to the Gentiles with the message of reconciliation. Romans 11:15.

He wrote to the Colossians that Jesus Christ made peace by the blood of His cross to reconcile all things unto Himself. Colossians 1:20. Then note the next verse; “And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.” The Gentiles had been alienated from the life of God. Ephesians 4:18. Alienated in and by Adam. Reconciled in and by Christ. When? After Israel had received the Divine judgment mentioned in Romans Eleven.

LESSON SIX

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

The Church of the mystery is called the “JointBody” in Ephesians 3:6. The “same Body” in this verse should be translated “Joint-Body.”

“Which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all and in all.”

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephesians 1:23 and 4:13.

Meditate upon this: “HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL.” Here we learn that the Church is the filling-up of Christ. It completes Christ.

Christ ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Ephesians 4:10.

Then note Colossians 1:19 and 2:9:

“For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.”

“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

Then note Colossians 2:10 and Ephesians 3:19: “And ye are complete in Him, Which is the Head of all principality and power.”

“Arid to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

All fulness dwells in Christ. The believer is full in Christ. God wants the believer to be filled with all the fulness of Christ.

Note where the Father is going to bring the Church, “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13.

Let us compare the first part of this verse with Ephesians 2:15. “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man.” “Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain One New Man, so making, peace.”

God’s work of grace is to be “One New Man”. “the Perfect Man”. “One Body”, composed of Head and members.

Then note the final state of the Church when God shall complete it.

“That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church. not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:26 and 27

“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Ephesians 1:4.

Surely in all of this we must glory in the sovereignty of God, in His infinite grace and in the wonders of Christ’s redemptive work, “As Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Ephesians 5:25.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife. and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Ephesians 5:31 and 32.

Christ left His Father in heaven and His mother on earth. He suffered for sins once, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

The Church of the mystery is “One Flesh” with Christ. “One New Man”. “The Fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” “The Perfect Man unto the stature of the Fulness of Christ.”

Christ the Head, “from which all the Body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” Colossians 2:19.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ. From Whom the whole Body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase, of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love” Ephesians 4:15 and 16.

This truly is blessed and glorious truth. Think of this identification. What a relationship. Union and unity! Surely there is no place for sectarianism in the Church of the mystery. The “One New Man” will be completed. It will be the work of God, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

And what a privilege is ours.

“For we are labourers together with God; ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereupon.” I Corinthians 3:9 and 10.

Labourers together with God, taking heed how we build together on the foundation laid by the wise masterbuilder, Paul.

THE BODY—THE BUILDING

Note how the work is laid out by God.

“And He gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the (building) Body of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11 and 12.

“But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7.

Every member of the Body of Christ should obey Ephesians 4:1 to 6. They should walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called. They should endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. They should not add any sectarian religious ceremony or program to the seven-fold unity of Ephesians 4:4 to 6. Each member should recognize and exercise his or her gift and appropriate the grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

All members of the Body of Christ are members one of another and they should all labour as one man with one mind; and they should all know what God’s definite purpose is during the present “grace” economy. God is building a House.

All of the agents of Satan and all of the contrary opinions, schemes, and activities and religious programs of sectarian church-members will not prevent the completion of this Building, “For the edifying (building up) of the Body of Christ”, “till we all come in the unity of the faith.”

So we can see how much there is to know concerning the mystery of God’s will, the accomplishing of His eternal “grace” purpose during this Church age.

What a responsibility! God’s servants have as stewards of the mysteries of God and with Paul, the wise masterbuilder. They, must labour with God according to Paul’s instructions or be workmen who need to be ashamed. We are not instructed to bring in the kingdom that will be at hand when the King comes. We are not to expect the Church of the mystery to carry on, under the by laws and constitution of the kingdom of heaven that was; at hand, but is not now at hand. Surely members of the Body of Christ cannot walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called until and unless they know what that calling is.

“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Ephesians 1:18

Every member of the Body of Christ should know that he has been made accepted in Christ, according to the riches of God’s grace; that he is complete in Christ; that he is seated in the heavenlies in Christ; that he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ; that in the ages to come God is going to shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us through Christ Jesus; and together the members of Christ’s Body will be the One New Man and the

Perfect Man. As there will be just One New Man, there can be, in God's plan, purpose and work, but one Body. Christians should earnestly contend for one Body, and one baptism, and obey Ephesians 3:9. "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God Who created all things by Jesus Christ."

FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

This word "edifying", in Ephesians 4:12, is the same Greek word as the word "building", in Ephesians 2:21—In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."

God is building a Building. God is building up a Body, Christ's' Body. Thus the Church is a structure and an organism.

Note Romans is 12:4 and 5—"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have. not the same office: So we, being many, are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

Note also I Corinthians 12:25—"That there should be no schism in the Body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."

God's desire is that there should be no division in the Body; union but no disunion. All one in Christ. All the members of that one Body, being many; are one Body; so also is Christ."

Until members of Christ's Body come unto the unity of the faith, unto the Perfect Man, they are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of peace.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body, and one. Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through you all." Ephesians 4:3 to 6.

No member of the Body of Christ would think of teaching that there are many Christs or two Christs; many Holy Spirits, or two Holy Spirits; many hopes, or two hopes; and yet, behold the confusion and disunion among these who are all one, because of sectarian baptisms added to the one Divine baptism of Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3 and 4.

Christ's baptism took place at Calvary. Luke 12:50. At the time the believer is saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he is baptized into the death of Christ, and is therefore crucified with Christ. He is dead with Christ and buried with Christ by baptism. No human being can do for a fellow-believer what is done for him in the sixth chapter of Romans. That is Divine work-not human. If there is any water in Romans six, water is meritorious, efficacious and necessary for salvation. By the same Divine operation the dead and buried believer is raised up with Christ to walk in newness of life; to seek those things which are above while he is waiting for Christ to appear in glory. Colossians 3:1 to 4—Romans 6:3 to 6. The believer is seated in the heavenlies. His witness to the world that he is dead, buried, raised and seated, is told in Colossians 3:6 and Romans 6:11 to 13. A water ceremony would never prove to the world that the baptized one is a new creature in Christ. That proof is the believer's spiritual behaviour.

But now for further consideration of Ephesians 4:15 and 16.

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; From Whom the whole Body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love."

“Grow up into Christ in all things”. Christ is our life. Paul said, “For me to live is Christ.” I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me”

The Building is being fitly framed together. The whole Body is fitly joined together. “Framed together” and “joined together” is one and the same word. Compacted by that which every joint supplieth, making increase of the Body.

Why do so many members of Christ’s Body behave as spiritual paupers when they have such a union with the Lord of Lords. His riches are our riches.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13.

And let us again consider our unlimited spiritual resources:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3.

LESSON SEVEN

THE CONFLICT IN THE HEAVENLIES

Note carefully Ephesians 6:11 and 12:

“Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.”

This is a real conflict with a real supernatural power, a real personal devil, who is accused of the crime of deceiving the whole world. Revelation 12:9.

Concerning Satan, Paul said, “we are not ignorant of his devices.” II Corinthians 2:11. Paul wrote “Satan hindered me.” I Thessalonians 2:18. Note this remarkable statement concerning Satan, “And no marvel; for Satan Himself is transformed into an angel of light.” II Corinthians 11:14.

When we read of the power and audacity of Satan in his three propositions to the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 4:1 to 13, we are not surprised that the Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged Satan to be “the prince of this world.” Read Luke 4:5 to 8 and John 14:30.

You and I should agree that the prince of this world has the world pretty much under his control. There is no exaggeration in the statement of I John 5:19:

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.”

Then note II Corinthians 4:3 and 4 and Ephesians 2:2

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

Note the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 13:38 and 39 and Matthew 13:4:

“The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are, the angels.”

“Some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls devoured them up.”

The fowls were under the control of the devil. The devil sowed the tares. Do not forget that he is transformed into an angel of light. It is true, as the Lord Jesus declared in John 8:44, Satan was a murderer from the beginning and a liar, and the father of it; but God warns us not to be ignorant of the devices of this supernatural creature who transforms himself into an angel of light. Thus in his camouflage, Satan is the most religious creature in the universe of God. Note how his servants propagate his religious messages as servants of Christ:

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” II Corinthians 11:13 to 15.

Note how Satan himself quoted the Scriptures when tempting the Lord Jesus. Luke 4:1 to 13. Satan, as the god of this age, blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they will not believe the gospel and be saved.

But in Ephesians members of the Body of Christ are seated in the heavenlies. Note in Ephesians 3:10 why they are to obey Ephesians 3:9:

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Ephesians 3:10.

“And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 3:9.

So we learn that believers are not wrestling against flesh and blood when they seek to know and propagate the wonderful message concerning the Body of Christ, “the dispensation of the mystery”. It seems that they are fighting humanity for they are opposed on every hand by religious Christians who themselves make no effort to obey Ephesians 3:9, but rather oppose, and sometimes with ungracious and foul tactics, those obedient servants of the Lord who try faithfully to make others see what is “the dispensation of the mystery”, “to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” Ephesians 3:10.

But the conflict is against the ruler of world darkness and spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. Although the devil lost the high place he had in the heavenlies he still has much to do with principalities and powers in the heavenlies. Surely we know that the clever devil is in control of most of the religious movements on this earth, as well as the political rulers of this earth.

But in this message we emphasize the particular sphere of Satan’s activities with respect to the position and possessions of members of the Body of Christ in the heavenlies. The devil, in Paul’s day, was determined that the mystery should not be proclaimed and explained. He used his religious servants to get Paul locked up in jail. Note Paul’s testimony in II Timothy 2:8 and 9: “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel: Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.

“The Word of God is not bound”. But note in connection with the spiritual panoply required to withstand the adversary:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication of all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:18 to 20.

The devil is just as determined today that there shall be no obedience to Ephesians 3:9 to 11:

“And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

He is more than successful so far as most of the members of Christ’s Body are concerned. But let every member join with Paul in the prayer of Ephesians 6:19 and 20—Colossians 4:3 and 4—Ephesians 1:16 to 18—Ephesians 3:15 to 18. This wisdom of God was ordained to our glory before the world began. I Corinthians 2:6 to 8.

Now carefully note the spiritual armour, the whole armour of God, required to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:11 to 20.

And again note carefully in Ephesians 6:19 and 20, the Divine method, the believer’s prayer for getting out the “mystery of the gospel”. Satan used his religious servants to get Paul in jail for that message.

IN THE HEAVENLIES PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Note carefully:

Ephesians 1:19 to 23

“And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power. Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, Far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, Which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Ephesians 2:6

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”

Ephesians 3:9 and 10.

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.”

Ephesians 4:10

“He that descended is the Same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things.”

Ephesians 6:12

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.”

What about these principalities and powers in the heavenlies? Note Colossians 1:16 and Colossians 2:13 and 15:

“For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him.”

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” “And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:13 and 15.

Now note why God wants all members of the Body of Christ to see the dispensation of the mystery:

“To the intent that now unto principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” Ephesians 3:10.

Now note that the devil does not want members of the Body of Christ to see.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.” Ephesians 6:12.

Is God having His way with most of these members? Or is Satan? And how many of such members are praying, the prayers of Ephesians 6:19 and 20—Colossians 4:3 and 4—Ephesians 1:16 and 17—Ephesians 3:16 to 19? Why not begin this very moment? Then you will look back on this moment as one that brought more joy into your soul than any moment except the moment when you received Christ and knew you were saved from the wrath to come.

But because you have escaped the wrath of God do not think that you shall escape the wrath of men. Paul did not. Of course you may not have to go to jail, as our Bill of Rights gives us protection from religious persecutors. Paul did not have this under the Roman government. But if you faithfully obey Ephesians 3:9 and 10, you will also know what it is to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, in accordance with II Timothy 1:7 and 8. And you may be sure that Satan will give you his special attention for he hates “the mystery” message with a vicious hatred.

But how blessed to know the truth of Colossians 2:10, “And ye are complete in Him Which is the Head of all principality and power.”

And Romans 8:31, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us; who can be against us?”

Then note in Romans 8:38 that principalities and powers cannot separate us from our Saviour’s love.

SATAN KNOWS—CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW

Satan understands the meaning of Ephesians 3:10. He does not want the members of the Church to do anything about it, or even understand it. Every member of the Body of Christ should know the truth of Romans 8:38 and 39 and Colossians 2:13 and 15. The Lord Jesus has

spoiled these principalities and powers and they can never separate the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But note again why God wants all believers to see “the dispensation of the mystery”:

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” Ephesians 3:10.

Let us humbly confess that we have been negligent or disobedient, perhaps ignorant, concerning the Lord’s will in this matter; but by His grace we are going to see what God wants us to see and help others to see it.

Let us be faithful in praying for open doors and open mouths that this glorious message may be sounded forth. Let us resolve that Satan shall no longer keep us from seeing “the dispensation of the mystery,” from making known “the mystery of the gospel”, that members of the Body of Christ in every place shall know the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and shall also walk worthy of the vocation wherewith members of Christ’s Body are called.

IN THE HEAVENLIES

The Holy Spirit wrote to the Hebrews, “knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance”.

Note carefully Hebrews 9:24—Colossians 1:5—Philippians 3:20—Ephesians 2:6—Ephesians 1:3—Philippians 3:20 and 21 and Colossians 3:1 to 4:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 9:24.

“For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of Truth of the gospel” Colossians 1:5.

“For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Philippians 3:20.

“And hath raised us up together, and made us sit in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:6.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 1:3.

Note again Philippians 3:20 and 21:

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

ON THINGS ABOVE.

“IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. SET YOUR AFFECTIONS ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON EARTH. FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE, IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD. WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, SHALL APPEAR. THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY.” Colossians 3:1 to 4

Surely our calling is a holy and heavenly calling. Our blessed Saviour is far above principalities and powers. are seated in the heavenlies in Him. We are blessed with all spiritual

blessings in the heavenlies. We are to seek those things which are above, where Christ sits, for our hope, position: citizenship and blessings are in the heavenlies.

PUT ON—PUT OFF

In Ephesians 4:22 to 32 and in Colossians 3:7 to 25 the believer is instructed to “put off” many carnal practices and to “put on” the Spiritual. The believer has “put on” and is to continue to “put on” the New man who is created in righteousness and true holiness, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” Ephesians 4:21 and Colossians 3:10.

We learn in Ephesians 2:8 to 10 that the believer is not saved by good works but unto good works. Note carefully Ephesians 2:10 and some other verses in Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 4:1

“I therefore, (the prisoner of the Lord) beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

Ephesians 4:17

“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.”

Ephesians 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 sweet-smelling savour.”

Ephesians 5:8

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.”

Ephesians 5:15

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.”

Surely believers, who are seated in the heavenlies, should walk as becometh saints whose citizenship is in heaven. Note some other verses as to the believer’s walk. Read Romans 6:4 and Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:16 and 25; Colossians 1:10, Colossians 2:6 and Colossians 4:5; I Thessalonians 2:12, I Thessalonians 4:1 and 4:12 and II Corinthians 5:7. We leave with you Colossians 1:10:

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”