

HOW TO

Study...
the
word
of
truth

II Timothy 2:15

The Bible is a big book. It is God's revelation to man. To know Him better we need to read and understand the information God has given us in it. But just how do we do that? How do we study this all important volume from God?

In the pages of the Bible, God has given clear instruction as to how we are to study His message to us. He tells us WHAT to study, WHY to study it, and even HOW to study it. And He tells us that if we will follow His directions, each of us will be "approved" and "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed".

The aim of this booklet is to help you see this directly from the Holy Scriptures.

We hope you find this study to be enlightening and edifying.

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II Timothy 2:15

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God tells us how to study the Word of Truth so we will be “approved workmen” rather than “unapproved and ashamed workmen”. God tells us to “rightly divide” His word.

The apostle Paul writes in II Tim. 2:15,

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

In this study we will look at this verse and see how our obedience to it will bring honor and glory to God.

In II Tim. 2:15 the apostle Paul tells believers:

WHAT to do - study

WHY to do it - to be approved unto God (not an ashamed workman)

HOW to do it - by rightly dividing the word of truth

Paul tells us that the scriptures are to be “rightly divided”.

We will see that being obedient to God's command to “rightly divide” the scriptures does not diminish the importance of “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” as we read in II Tim. 3:16.

It is by the “rightly dividing” of the word of truth that “all scripture is ...profitable” for both the workman’s approval and the purposes and will of God. Rightly dividing means to “cut straight - into pieces or parts”.

Let's begin our study by looking at Adam in the Garden.

God’s dealing with Adam in and out of the Garden

God began His dealings with man in the Garden of Eden. It was in the Garden that “*the LORD commanded the man,*” Gen. 2:16. God revealed His will to Adam with His commandments. God told Adam plainly and simply what he should and shouldn’t do.

God put Adam in the Garden with the instructions, “*to dress it and to keep it*”, Gen. 2:15. Adam’s vocation was to be the groundskeeper or landscaper in this wonderful garden. Adam was also to name all the animals that God brought to him, Gen. 2:19. Later, God gave Eve to Adam as his “help meet”, “*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*” Gen. 2:25.

Although God gave Adam great freedom and responsibility in the Garden, He did give him one warning. Gen. 2:16-17, “*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day*

that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

God dispensed a set of instructions to Adam for his obedience of faith. God chose to manage man in the garden by giving commandments to Adam that were appropriate to man's condition. Adam's condition was one of innocence in the Garden.

Adam's stewardship

Adam's commandments can be called a stewardship or dispensation. These commandments made up the first stewardship given by God to man. Adam, as God's first steward, was to manage God's household and to be responsible to God's commandments.

A stewardship is a set of instructions that is to be followed by the steward. A steward's responsibility is to follow or dispense (give out or to carry out) the stewardship he has been given.

Adam's responsibility was to stay in the Garden, dress and keep it, name the animals and to be unashamed with his nakedness. Adam and Eve were not to disobey God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan introduces his lie program to man

Things were going according to God's wonderful plan for His creation until Satan came to Eve as a serpent. Satan quoted the Word of God, then

changed the Word of God and then added to the Word of God. Changing the Word of God by adding or subtracting from it is the same as corrupting the Word of God.

Satan quoted the Word of God to Eve in Gen. 3:1, “...*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*”

Satan changed the Word of God in Gen. 3:3, “... *Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*” Satan added “neither shall ye touch it”; this was not in God’s instructions to Adam.

Satan contradicted the Word of God by adding to it. Gen. 3:4, “...*Ye shall not surely die.*” God said in Gen. 2:17, “...*thou shalt surely die*”. Satan added the word “not” and lied to Eve with His perversion of the truth of God.

Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The stewardship, the commandments dispensed by God for man, had now been disobeyed.

The entrance of sin changed everything for Adam and Eve just as God had promised it would. Adam and Eve had moved from being sinless to sinners. Man’s condition changed, necessitating a change in God’s stewardship to Adam. The result of man’s changed condition caused God to dispense a

second set of instructions for Adam. We now see God changing His stewardship to them and making them responsible to a new and different stewardship. They were now to follow a new set of commandments.

Adam receives a new stewardship

God sent them from the garden in which He had put them, Gen. 3:23, 24, *“Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,”*

Their nakedness is now to be covered. Gen. 3:21, *“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”* They were no longer to be unashamed in their nakedness.

In their first stewardship they were promised only life. Adam and Eve were not to know death while in the Garden in their innocence. They would now experience death as a result of God judging their sin and fulfilling the promise made in Gen. 2:17, *“for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*

The death God promised included both a spiritual death and a physical death. Their disobedience brought God's judgment. They were now spiritually dead to God. Also, their physical bodies would now see death. God did fulfill His promise, they would “surely die”.

Defining a stewardship - dispensation

We see in this example of God's dealings with the first man a key to our understanding the scriptures. Adam, one man, lived under two separate, different and distinct stewardships or dispensations. A stewardship or dispensation has the same meaning as the following:

- household management
- economy
- superintendence
- to dispense
- to deal with
- administration

In God's first stewardship or dispensation to Adam we find that specific instructions were given. When Adam's need or condition changed as a result of sin, God made a change in His management of man. God dispensed a new set of instructions to which man now became responsible. God's new instructions replaced His previous ones. The old stewardship was set aside when new instructions were given. Man's obedience is not now to the old instructions but to the new ones.

The first lesson we want to learn from this example is that God changed His program with man!

It is clear that Adam lived under two different and distinct stewardships or dispensations.

The fact that God changed His program with Adam is not the same as saying that God, Himself, changed.

God does not change, “I change not”.

The scriptures are clear, God does not change. Malachi 3:6, *“For I am the LORD, I change not;...”* We learn here that the essence and character of God does not change. We can have confidence and hope in the Lord because of His unchanging essence and character. God will never change when it comes to His being Faithful, Love, Light, Truth, Holy, Righteous, Eternal, omniscient and omnipotent. Having a God who “changes not” is a wonderful truth in which to rest and take comfort. However, our understanding of this truth should not cause us to be confused when it comes to our unchanging God changing His dealings with man.

We read in Heb. 13:8, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”* This verse teaches us that the essence and character of the Lord Jesus Christ do not change, and cannot change as we read in Malachi 3:6. However, this does not teach that the Lord doesn’t change His commandments, instructions or dispensations to man. God gave two different dispensations to Adam. God has given a number of dispensations since Adam. The latest and current dispensation given is “the dispensation of the grace of God” given to the apostle Paul for us. God will bring in yet

another dispensation after He raptures His church.

Often times preachers teach just the opposite of what the scriptures teach about our changeless Lord. They use Hebrews 13:8 to teach that Jesus is the same in His dealings with men and that God's dealings with men don't change. An example of such teaching would be: "because the Lord Jesus healed the sick in His earthly ministry to Israel, He is still healing today. All we need to do is to claim our healing." But, Hebrews 13:8 is not talking about our Lord changing His stewardship to men; it is talking about His essence and nature not changing.

God's dealings with men have changed and will change again. We, like Adam, need to be aware of what the changes are and when they occurred. We need to know what our stewardship is so we can be faithful stewards.

1 Cor. 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Adam rightly divided the word of truth

Adam "rightly divided the word of truth". Adam knew that God's second dispensation was now to be obeyed for his obedience of faith. Adam knew that God's first instructions were the Word of God, but that they now were not to be obeyed. To obey the first set of instructions now would be sin. Adam understood that it would have been disobedience

for him to attempt to go back into the Garden and obey the commandments that were given to him before he had sinned.

Adam knew that the dispensation given to him while he was in the garden was and would always continue to remain the Word of God, but he was not now to be obedient to it. Adam could learn from God's first stewardship but he knew not to obey it. After Adam sinned, the second stewardship became the Word of God to Adam to which he was responsible to obey. This is the Word of God Adam now needed to heed.

We see Adam approaching the word of God the same way the apostle Paul teaches us to approach it, II Timothy 2:15,

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Paul tells us to “rightly divide the word of truth”

Paul tells believers to “rightly divide the word of truth.” This is what Adam did when he divided or cut straight God's words and obeyed God's second dispensation to him at the expense of the first. Adam divided the word, cut it straight into pieces. Adam knew that his first dispensation was as much the word of God as the second, but that the first was now replaced by the second. Adam knew that all

God's words (scripture) were **for** him to learn from but not all scripture was **to** him to obey.

Paul tells us in II Tim. 3:16, 17, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*". Paul says, "*all scripture is... profitable*". However, scripture must be "rightly divided" as we saw Adam do, for it to be profitable. Scripture, if not rightly divided, can be unprofitable. We need to know that all scripture is **for** us to learn from, but not **to** us to obey. It is not profitable to apply all scripture to us. Adam didn't. Adam had respect for every word of God but he knew that his standing before God was according to his obedience of faith to God's latest dispensation.

When a saint understands that he must study the Word of God dispensationally, he is being obedient to God's instruction to, "rightly divide the word of truth". We are not honoring or rightly dividing God's Word by randomly going everywhere and anywhere in it to find our stewardship any more than Adam did. We read and study the whole Bible but with the knowledge that it is all for us but not all to us or about us.

There are some truths or principles of God in the Scriptures that never change from dispensation to dispensation. For example, God doesn't change. There are other truths that are only to be applied and obeyed during the dispensation in which they were given. It is these dispensational changes that need to be addressed now because these have to

do with God's "terms of acceptance" for man in a specific dispensation.

From when Adam was in the Garden up to our present time, God has dispensed a number of dispensations for man's obedience of faith. We saw two dispensations in just the lifetime of the first man.

Man's responsibility to God changes with each dispensation. In the Garden, Adam didn't have the law of Moses with its' water baptisms, tithing, holy days, temple worship, sacrifices, and didn't have Paul's gospel of salvation by grace through faith, etc. These weren't a part of Adam's first or second dispensation.

When a Bible student studies any Bible subject, rightly dividing the Scriptures should cause him to conclude his study with God's truth to him from his own dispensation. For us, living in the Age of Grace, we should conclude our doctrine in Paul's writings. Just because in various places in God's Word we find references to prayer, water baptism, forgiveness, angels, etc., it does not always mean they are directed to you or are about you to follow and obey.

"Scriptural" and "Dispensational"

One can be "scriptural" and not "dispensational". After the fall of man Adam could have said that God's first dispensation to him was the Word of God

or “in the Bible” and so he was going to be obedient to it. This would have been foolish and disobedient. Adam would have been disobedient to God even though he was being “scriptural”.

We need to be careful to “rightly divide the word of truth” as Adam did. The Bible can be “rightly divided” or “wrongly divided”. Wrongly dividing the Scriptures is what Peter talks about in II Pet. 3:16, *“...which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”*

Peter identifies those who wrest the Scriptures as being “unlearned” and “unstable”. The “unlearned” do not “rightly divide” as God tells them and are “unstable” as a result. Wrestling the Scriptures brings destruction. Not damnation, but Bible study and a Christian life that is unprofitable to the work of the Lord and unprofitable in the life of the believer.

Peter is specifically referring to what saints do with the epistles of Paul when he speaks about wresting or twisting the scripture.

II Pet. 3:15, 16, *“...beloved brother Paul...As also in all his epistles.”*

Being scriptural and not dispensational can cause one to wrest the Scriptures. Wrestling the Scriptures is twisting them and making them say what you want

them to say rather than what they really say. Right division is God's answer to wresting them.

Our dispensation, “the dispensation of the grace of God”

The apostle Paul tells us that the risen Christ gave him a dispensation or stewardship that was to be given to you and to me.

Eph. 3:2, 3, “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery;”

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.”

The dispensation our Lord gave Paul is called “the dispensation of the grace of God”. God began the dispensation of the grace of God with the salvation of Saul on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 and God has kept it in effect until now. You and I live in the dispensation of the grace of God. It is obvious that we don't live in the first or second dispensation that God gave to Adam. Nor do we live in the dispensation of law.

Paul preaches that the dispensation of the grace of God was not given by God nor preached by

anyone until Christ revealed it to him.

Eph. 3:2, "...which is given me to you-ward:"

Paul identifies himself with his God-given gospel over and over much like Moses did with "his word from God" to Israel. Paul says, "my gospel", "the gospel given to me", etc.

Rom. 2:16, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to **my gospel.**"

Rom. 16:25, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to **my gospel..**"

II Tim. 2:8, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to **my gospel:**"

Paul says that this dispensation of grace was hid in God and was kept a mystery or secret until Christ revealed it to him and to him only.

Eph. 3:5, "Which in other ages **was not made known** unto the sons of men..."

Col. 1:25-26 "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even **the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:**"

Rom. 16:25, “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,**”

Although we see a number of dispensations in the Word of God where God has changed His dealings with man, we see principally two primary divisions in Scripture that we must recognize if we are to be approved workmen who are not ashamed. The two primary divisions in Scripture are not Old Testament and New Testament, but “prophecy” and “mystery”.

Prophecy and Mystery

Prophecy is that which “*God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began*” Acts 3:21. Prophecy is concerned with the earth and Christ's reign upon it with God's earthly people, Israel.

Mystery, Rom. 16:25, “*that which was kept secret since the world began*” has to do with the church, the Body of Christ. Mystery is concerned with heaven and our exaltation there with Christ.

Prophecy – was prophesied, was spoken.

Mystery – was kept secret and was unprophesied.
In Gen. 1:1 we read of the two spheres that God is

interested in, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”*

God has two separate and distinct agencies with which He has worked and is working to accomplish His purposes in these spheres. The first is Israel and He has spoken about their program ever since the world began. The second is the church, the Body of Christ, and truth concerning His mystery grace program about the church has been kept secret since the world began.

Christ's earthly ministry, Prophecy not Mystery

Israel lived under the prophecy program, which included following Moses and the law. Our Lord, in His earthly ministry to Israel, came as a Jew submissive to the Law of Moses. We read of our Lord Jesus Christ in Gal. 4:4,

“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

Jesus Christ obeyed the law and came to fulfil it as we see in Matt. 5:17,

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

Jesus Christ in the flesh came to fulfil the law and the prophets. He did not come to “fulfil the Word of

God” with “the mystery”. That was the specific ministry that Christ gave to Paul. Col. 1:25-26,

*“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to **fulfill the word of God**; Even **the mystery** which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:”*

In the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we find Christ teaching His followers to obey the law, Matt. 23:2-3

“Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do...”

Matt. 28:20,

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”

This truth is from the prior dispensation of law, and not for us to obey in the age of grace. Our Lord was teaching Israel to obey the Law of Moses both during His earthly ministry to Israel and in His resurrection ministry to Israel as we see in Matt. 28:20.

We need to ask ourselves, “What sayeth the rightly divided scriptures?”

Paul says in Rom. 6:14, “...for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

Gal. 5:18, *“But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”*

When the Holy Spirit leads a believer in the dispensation of the grace of God, He does not lead him to follow the law! We need to be dispensational and not just scriptural even with the words of our Lord in His earthly ministry to Israel.

While prophecy is for us to learn from, it is not to us to obey. Our dispensation is mystery, not prophecy. As we have seen, the gospel accounts of Mathew, Mark, Luke and John can be more aptly considered as Old Testament books in that they are mostly about Israel's prophecy program, “that which was spoken”. They are Jewish books, concerning Israel and Judaism. We see law-keeping honored and taught throughout these books.

If you were on a ship that was sinking, and all you could take with you was a little book containing just the four gospels, you could learn a lot about prophecy but nothing about mystery.

God's mystery program, Grace

God's mystery program, the dispensation of grace, began with Paul. Paul says in Eph. 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;”

“Unsearchable” means “unprophesied” or “no tracks or footprint”. There was no trace of mystery truth before Paul. The dispensation of the grace of God could not be found in the scriptures before Christ revealed it to Paul as it was:

- *hid in God*, Eph. 3:9

- *hid from ages and from generations*, Col. 2:26

- *not made known*, Eph. 3:5

- *a mystery – kept secret since the world began*, Rom. 16:25

God's secret mystery program of the dispensation of the grace of God was not preached by anyone before Christ revealed it to Paul! We can not find the mystery program revealed anywhere in the Bible before we learn of it from Paul.

Our Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry to Israel did not reveal anything about the mystery program. Paul tells us in Rom. 15:8,

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:”

Christ came according to the prophecy program, in the dispensation of law, and was a minister to Israel. Our Lord's earthly ministry was to Israel as a minister to the circumcision. Notice, the verse says, “**was**”.

Today our Lord is no longer a minister to the circumcision as he was in the gospel accounts, but

is the Head of His church, the Body of Christ. Peter and the eleven other apostles did not reveal anything about the mystery either. They taught prophecy, "that which was spoken since the world began". As late as Pentecost we see Peter saying in Acts 2:16, "*But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel:*" The events of Pentecost were the subject of prophecy. It had been spoken and foretold by God. Paul's secret mystery revelation was not the subject of prophecy and was at that time still "hid in God".

The mystery (secret) program of the dispensation of the grace of God was not made known until after Pentecost, and after the stoning of Stephen when Christ revealed it to Paul.

Paul the apostle to the Gentiles

Rom. 11:13, "*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:*"

Paul says that he is the apostle, the one God sent, to the Gentiles. Paul magnifies his office. Paul's God-given position as Apostle to the Body of Christ has much importance in this present economy of God. I Cor. 14:37, "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*"

Today, a spiritual saint will acknowledge Paul's writings to be the commandments of Christ.

It is in the writings of the apostle Paul, the books of Romans through Philemon, that we find God's dispensational truth to us, His church the Body of Christ. It is here and here only that we find the stewardship the Lord has given to us. Here we find the "dispensation of the grace of God".

God, in revealing His dispensation of grace to Paul, just like He did with Adam, has included all the truth we need to live godly lives before our Lord.

Why God kept the dispensation of grace a secret

Paul tells us why God kept the age of grace a secret in I Cor. 2:7-8,

"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."

Satan would not have crucified the Lord Jesus Christ if he knew what God was going to accomplish by the cross. God had to keep the secret "hid in Himself" so Satan would not know that the cross was going to mean his defeat.

God defeated Satan at the cross, Gen. 3:15,

"...it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Christ crushed Satan's head at the cross. The accomplishments of Christ's finished crosswork are not fully known or made manifest until revealed to and preached by Paul.

God, as His prophecy program reveals, will yet fulfil His promises made to Israel and they will rule the earth. God, as His mystery program reveals, will with the Body of Christ take the heavens back under His control. This is possible because Christ went to the cross and there defeated Satan. Christ's victory over sin and death on the cross made it possible for God to reclaim the earth through Israel and the heavens through the Body of Christ.

Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fullness 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:"

In a future dispensation known as "the dispensation of the fullness of times", God will bring all under the authority of His Son because of the cross. This would not have been possible if God hadn't kept the mystery program secret.

We should also rejoice in knowing that God kept the mystery program a secret, because as Paul says in I Cor. 15:17,

“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

If God did not keep the secret and if the mystery was known before the cross, Satan would not have crucified our Lord and we would still be in our sins! Without the crosswork of Christ we would still be in our sins and there would be no hope for any of us.

The dispensation of the grace of God

Just as Adam needed to know what his stewardship was, so do we. The following are truths God revealed through Paul concerning the dispensation of grace:*

- Israel is set aside, Rom. 11:7, 12, 15, 20, 32
- Mercy shown to all alike, Rom. 11:32
- Gospel of grace of God through Christ's finished crosswork, Acts 20:24, Eph. 3:2
- Believer's are reconciled to Christ by the cross, Eph. 2:16
- A “no difference” gospel between Jew and Greek, Rom. 10:12
- Jew and Gentile believers baptized into one body, I Cor. 12:13
- Body of Christ is positioned with Christ in the heavenlies, Col. 3:1-3

Adam's obedience of faith to God was dependent on Adam's rightly dividing God's Word to him. Adam could not be obedient to God if he did not correctly distinguish between the two stewardships

* *Things That Differ*, C.R. Stam, page 58

and be a faithful steward to the one that God gave him to follow. Mixing the stewardships, taking some of the first and adding it to the second, would be the same as disobeying the dispensation God gave him and corrupting the Word of God. Our obedience of faith needs to be according to the truth revealed to Paul for us in the age of grace.

Paul tells us what godliness is, in the age of grace in Titus 1:1, 3

*“...and **the acknowledging of the truth** which is after godliness;”*

Paul tells us what this truth is in verse 3. *“But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, **which is committed unto me** according to the commandment of God our Saviour;”*

Godliness today is to obey the mystery truth Christ committed to Paul.

God committed a dispensation to Paul and God wants His Son manifested according to this mystery truth. We read how the Lord Jesus is to be preached today in the age of grace in Rom. 16:25,

“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,”

Jesus Christ is to be preached according to the revelation of the mystery. He is to be preached according to the truth first made known to Paul!

Paul also tells us how not to preach Christ in the age of grace in II Cor. 5:16,

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

Paul is teaching us here that we are no longer to make distinctions between men after the flesh such as between Jew and Gentile. This distinction existed since the time God established it with His calling of Abram and calling out of a people for His name, Israel in Gen. 12. From then onward, men were known after the flesh, a God-given distinction made between Jew and Gentile. Our Lord also recognized this distinction during His earthly ministry. When Paul states that now henceforth we are to know no man after the flesh he is stating a major dispensational change. Paul is changing the teaching that even Christ taught and supported in His earthly ministry to Israel with the Jew first. God knows men today by their heart. God sees men only as saved or lost, not as Jew or Gentile.

Paul's next statement is even more significant when he tells us that we are not to know Christ after the flesh any longer. What does this mean? Knowing Christ after the flesh is to know Him as He is

presented in the gospels as a minister to Israel, the circumcision. Christ was preached after the flesh when He was a minister of the circumcision, but today, He is not to be preached after the flesh but as Paul says in Rom. 16:25,

“...according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery,”

God's house

In the Old Testament, God had a house. It was the house of Israel.

Ex. 40:38, *“For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the **house of Israel**, throughout all their journeys.”*

Today He is building another house; it is the Church, the Body of Christ.

I Tim. 3:15, *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the **house of God, which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

All true believers make up this house, and Paul tells us in II Tim. 2:15 – 21 how to be a vessel of honor in God's house. There are two criteria given. The first is to **“rightly divide the word of truth”**. This makes one

a **workman unashamed and approved unto God.** The second is to **“purge himself from these”**. This has reference to sin.

II Tim. 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

II Tim. 2:20-21 “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

Gold and silver or wood and earth

Do you study the word of God as God instructs in II Tim. 2:15 *“rightly dividing the word of truth”*? Do you agree with God that Paul is our apostle today and that we find our stewardship from God in the scriptures He gave us through Paul?

I Cor. 4:1, 2 “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries (mystery program) of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

Are you a vessel of gold and silver, a vessel of honour *“meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto*

every good work?" Wrongly dividing the word and/or living a life not purged from sin makes one a vessel of wood and earth.

Faithful stewards of the mysteries of God are like those known as the Bereans in Acts 17:11,

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The Bereans didn't just take what came from the pulpit as gospel. Bereans searched the scriptures daily.

Today, the church at large does not give recognition to Paul's special apostleship and the dispensation that was given to him by Christ. Christ said to His disciples in John 13:20,

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

Stephen preached about Israel's treatment of God's spokesmen to them in his last sermon in Acts 7:52,

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One..."

The church today is no different than Israel when we do not acknowledge the messenger Christ has sent specifically to us with His mystery program.

Israel knew that Moses was the lawgiver and that he was to be followed and obeyed in the dispensation of law. Likewise, the church today is to pay attention to God's apostle Paul in the dispensation of grace.

Believers are sometimes critical of Roman Catholics for blindly following the Pope and church doctrine at the expense of believing the Word of God. Many of these same believers are just as much men-followers when it comes to following their pastor, denomination, church teachings or a certain Bible school or seminary at the expense of the Word of God.

Those in the Catholic faith are very clear about who they follow; they follow Peter. Peter is part of God's Prophecy program which God has set aside but will resume again after this dispensation has concluded.

To glorify the Lord in this dispensation, we need to follow Paul and build on the foundation laid by Paul just as he tells us in I Cor. 3:10,

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let

every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

Jesus Christ is the foundation which Paul laid and he tells us to build upon it the way he, the wise master builder instructs us to. Today believers are to build with Pauline (Paul's mystery) and not Petrine (Peter's prophecy) doctrine.

I Cor. 2:5 "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Paul says that "your faith" should stand in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men. Even sincere, well-meaning men who we look up to in the faith are not to be our authority. Only the rightly-divided Word of God is to be the authority.

The Word of God rightly divided also gives us these truths for the dispensation of grace:

- Paul is God's apostle to the Gentiles in the age of grace, Rom 11:13
- Jesus Christ is to be preached according to Rom. 16:25, 26, *"according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery,"*
- Rightly dividing the word of truth is how believers are to study the scriptures in every dispensation, II Tim. 2:15

In Eph. 3:9, Paul tells us what the church today is to be doing.

“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:”

Paul says in Acts 20:32,

“And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up...”

NOTES

NOTES

Bible Time Line

Time Past

But Now

Ages to Come

Ephesians 2:11, 12

Ephesians 2:13

Ephesians 2:7

Prophecy

Mystery

Prophecy

Abraham David John Jesus Christ
 Adam Moses the Baptist Peter
 Israel Law Throne

Christ's Great White
 Rapture Second Throne
 Coming Judgment

Israel's Kingdom
 Prophesied at Hand
 Daniel 2:44
 Kingdom Offered
 Matt. 3:2 & Rejected

Dispensation of Grace Begins
 Kingdom Postponed, Rom. 11:25
 Paul's Gospel for both Jew & Gentile
 One Body of Christ
 Rom. 5:8 "Christ died for us"
 Eph. 2:8,9

7 yr. tribulation
 Kingdom 1000 years
 Rev. 20:11
 Israel's Program resumes

"For by grace are ye saved through faith"

Genesis to John

Acts

Romans to Philemon

Hebrews to Revelation

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Savior

We live in the Age of Grace

Paul is our apostle

I Timothy 1:15

Ephesians 3:2

Romans 11:13

Salvation

God's most important word to you is about your need for salvation. God's word tells us plainly and simply that we are sinners in need of a Saviour. God paid for our sin on Calvary's cross when the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, died for our sin. Our apostle Paul tells us in I Cor. 15:3 & 4 what the saving message of the gospel is.

*"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:"*

This is the message of the gospel of grace that we need to believe to be saved. Eph. 2:8 & 9 tells us that salvation is by grace through faith and not by our works.

Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? If so, praise the Lord. If not, you can chose to place your trust in Him right now.

MORE INFORMATION

This booklet was made available to you by fellow members of the Body of Christ at the
Grace Harbor Church of Arlington Heights, Illinois. USA
P.O.Box 8611, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
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If you found this booklet to be helpful and would like to find out more about God's glorious Grace and all that He has done for you, please visit our website at

<http://www.grace-harbor-church.org>

There you will find other materials for both children and adults including free Bible studies and freely downloadable recordings of our Sunday morning Bible teaching sessions.

MARTIN LUTHER'S DILEMMA

"Justification" is a Bible word that means: "the act of pronouncing righteous" and "to be cleared from guilt". Many believers have been troubled when comparing what Paul says about justification to what James says.

Paul says in Romans 3:28, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."*

James says in James 2:24, *"Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."*

Martin Luther wrote the following paragraph over 500 years ago about his challenge with these two statements from the word of God.

"Many sweat to reconcile St. Paul and St. James, but in vain. 'Faith justifies' and 'faith does not justify' contradict each other flatly. If anyone can harmonize them I will give him my Doctor's Hood and let him call me a fool" .

Luther was on the right track in his approach to resolving this apparent contradiction when he wrote,

**"...we must look and see to whom it has been spoken,
whether it fits us."**

HOW TO

*Study...
the
word
of
truth*

|| Timothy 2:15

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