

## A Short Primer on "Right Division"•

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In 2 Timothy 2:15 the Apostle Paul writes, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth." This doctrine has come to be known as "Right Division". In its clearest meaning "rightly dividing" is correctly interpreted as "**accurate handling**" of the Word of God. To their loss of reward, there are those, even with good intentions, who misunderstand and misapply God's Word, failing to rightly divide the word of truth.

God's Word specifies and limits the **intended meaning** of His entire revelation. His Word does not lead the reader to believe there are many, even multiple interpretations and applications of His divine revelation. Biblical interpretation does not depend on any *subjective* understanding of history or culture or personal bias. It is false to claim the meaning of divine revelation continues to evolve over time or that there is no way for certain to know the meaning of many 'difficult' passages. This is where Paul's directive in accurate handling applies. Throughout his Epistles Paul teaches there are significant **distinctions** evident throughout God's 66 Book revelation. The "approved" Bible student must correctly **apply these distinctions** in order to be able to open the Bible to any book, chapter and verse and fruitfully and accurately glean God's intended meaning. Approved workmen (servants of Christ) accurately study and understand the Bible's **entire** truth, remembering that **not all** biblically revealed truth directly applies to members of Christ's Body. Students of God's Word will not be ashamed at the Judgment Seat of Christ if they accurately handle divine revelation.

Keeping **10 specific distinctions clear** contributes to accurate handling of the Bible's teachings:

1. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32). This text and others<sup>1</sup> clarify divine **distinction** between people groups. All persons are either:

- a. an unrepentant Jew
- b. an unrepentant Gentile

or c. a repentant Jew or Gentile, collectively identified as Christ's Body.

Scripture, correctly interpreted, always **refers to a specific people group**, either Jews, Gentiles or members of Christ's Body. Church members are confused if they fail to understand the unique people group identified in the New Testament as the revealed mystery of Christ's Body. The Body of Christ is not the same people group identified in the Old Testament as Israel.

2. Time is a creation. God created time in **distinct** dispensations or ages. In each dispensation man is **tested**<sup>2</sup> differently than in other dispensations. The unashamed workman studies key texts<sup>3</sup> to understand each dispensation ends in judgment, man failing His Creator, and His Creator always compensating for man's failure. There are seven ages; we are living in the sixth age. While works of divine grace mark all dispensations, grace was specifically applied at Pentecost (Acts 2), breathing Holy Spirit life into Christ's body; This grace will "be taken out of the away" (2 Thess 2:7) after the removal of Christ's Body (1 Thess 4:13-18.)

3. God the Son is not now on the earth. He sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. The Son came physically into the world approximately 2,000 years ago; He will

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<sup>1</sup> (Jews) John 4:22, Rom 3:1-2, 9:4-5 (Gentiles) Mark 7:27-28, Eph 2:11-12, 4:17-18 (the Church) Eph 1:22-23, 5:29-33, 1 Pet 2:9.

<sup>2</sup> **Tested** is not synonymous with saved. Regarding testing see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Ariel Ministries.

<sup>3</sup> Gen 1:26, 2:16-17, 3:6-24, 6:5, 11-12, 7:11-12, 23, 9:1-2, 11:1-8, 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:5, 26:3, 28:12-13; Ex 1:13-14, 19:1-8; 2 Kings 17:1-18, 25:1-11; Isa 2:1-4, all of Isaiah 11; Jer 30:5-7; Dan 12:1; Zeph 1:15-18; Matt 24:21-22, 29-30, 25:31-46; Luke 17:26-30, 18:8; Acts 2: 22-23, 7:51-52, 15:14-17; Rom 3:19-20, 10:5; Gal 3:10; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev 19:11-21, 20:1-15, 21:, 22:.

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return physically to sit on David's throne at Tribulation's end. (A major confusion Bible students *cause themselves* is failing to understand this **distinction**: Christ gathers His Bride in the air *before* the Tribulation; this **prophetic event is distinct from** Christ's return to earth *with* those same saints *at the end* of the Tribulation.) There are two, and only two advents or comings of Christ, one having already occurred in history and one yet to be fulfilled in prophecy; Christ's translation or gathering or rapture of His Body and Bride is consummated in marriage in heaven. This event is *not* one of the two visible comings of Christ. It is a private mystery, known and experienced only by Christ and His Bride. Also, one must understand Old Testament scriptures that **distinguish** between Moshiah ben Josef and Moshiah ben David. **It is** Messiah, son of Joseph (the Lamb) who first came to earth. **It will be** this same Messiah, son of David (the conquering King) who will return in victory at the end of Jacob's trouble to usher in the final age, the Millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem with His saints.

4. Regarding John 5:28a-29 ("*all that are in the graves shall hear his voice... and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*") **not all these dead are raised to life at the same time.**

John 5 refers to two future resurrections. (Previously, Christ's death was accompanied by a different resurrection. Those souls "went with Jesus into heaven". See Scofield note Matt 27:52-53, page 1042.) But the 'hour' indicated in John 5 has lasted nearly 2,000 years(!) **Distinction** must be made between future resurrections of the **just** and the **unjust** which will not be simultaneous. Philippians 3:11 is incorrectly worded in the King James: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection *of the dead.*"<sup>4</sup> Verse 11b is accurately translated "*from the dead*" in other versions, "...necessarily implying a **selection process**-- that some of "the dead" remain (Scofield p. 27). This is a key **distinction**: The dead who have earned perdition are *now* only anticipating their full future agony that awaits their physical resurrection after the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth with His saints of all ages.

5. There is not just one common or general judgment of all souls for all time, as many incorrectly believe. God's Word reveals five judgments, only two in view here, as these are the two that mark **distinction** between the saved and the lost. Those who are **in Christ** will stand only at the Judgment Seat of Christ to answer for their deeds in the flesh that benefited Christ's work. All works not worthy of His calling will be burned and suffer loss. But those who **are not in Christ** will appear at the **distinctly separate** Great White Throne Judgment where there will be no opportunity to offer works for righteousness. Fair and just sentences of eternal suffering will be handed down at this throne judgment. Of the other three judgments, **the first occurred** at the **Cross** (propitiation for all past, present and future sin); the **second is ongoing** in the life of the Believer; and the **third will occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat** at Christ's Second Coming when the nations will be judged.

6. In this dispensation the most important **distinction** routinely ignored is one which clarifies the profound difference between **God's Law** and **God's Grace**. (The reader should not limit their study of this topic to this **Short Primer**• since the subject is broader and more important for the edification of the believer than is summarized here. (Likewise, **Distinctions 1, 7, 8, 9 and 10** require extra study for best understanding.) Correct understanding of God's Law excludes any notion that Law operates in a life beyond the purpose of convicting of sin, that conviction earning condemnation.<sup>5</sup> The Law points only, and continually, to the lost sinner's need to receive the **only work of grace** that rightly exonerates him from the penalty of violating God's Law. The Law cannot be broken (destroyed). It is glorified in the just penalty paid at the Cross to break the power of sin over life. **In the next life** sinners will be **judged by** the Law. This eternal fact corresponds **in this life** to each soul **judged as deficient compared to** God's Perfect Law. (This is why Pharisees and legalists are an embarrassment and disgrace as

<sup>4</sup> See *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, C. I. Scofield, Scripture Truth Book Co., Fincastle, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> See Romans 8:1 for the nullification of condemnation in the life of the true Believer.

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their feigned righteousness is publicly exhibited.) No one ever living, except Christ Jesus, has the ability to satisfy the unyielding demands of the Law. The most fundamental **distinction** between Grace and Law is the ability of Grace to grant eternal life compared to the inability of Law to justify a life. Therefore, the "rule of life" for the one covered by the blood of Jesus is **not** to post Ten Commandments in the home, office or courthouse --even while believing genuine efforts to honor those commands accrue merit for attempts to live by the Law.<sup>6</sup> The second set of tablets of the Law brought down by Moses to the needy people were housed **within the ark**, a housing that merely foreshadows Christ's Two Great Commands in Luke 10:27 internalized by faith. "And He answering said, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; **and thy neighbour** as thyself."<sup>7</sup>

7. Few verses are as misconstrued as this: "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Without clearly understanding the **distinction** between the believer's **two natures**, many are lead astray to vacillate between Lucifer's twin lies --believing that after conversion a true saint does not (and actually cannot) sin --or experiencing dejection and defeat when sin is recognized. At the moment of conversion flesh does not pass away. It is only the eternal penalty for sin in the flesh that passes away. Until the resurrection (see 4. above) saved souls are subject to the failings of the flesh. While Christ's nature in a believer is greater than he who is in the world the old nature remains until death. And "between those two natures **there is conflict**".<sup>8</sup> Failing to understand this **distinction** subjects true believers to suffer the adversary's incessant hounding. Further, that believer's witness for Christ's finished work is muted and weak. He does not walk in victory.

8. Based on a firm foundation of the **distinction** described in 7., believers must embrace the truth of the **distinction** between their immovable **standing** in Christ and their varying **state** in Christ. Their standing is based on their position, their fixed identity in Christ<sup>9</sup>, while their state varies either according to their moment-by-moment submission or failure to submit to the Holy Spirit's leading and correcting. Submission to the Spirit constitutes basic obedience to Christ.

9. Unless the distinctions of 6., 7., and 8. are correctly understood, confusion continues for the Bible student. They suffer **fear** of loss of salvation **and** they are **a stumbling block** to those whom they've been called to bring the good news of Christ's death on the Cross. They falsely believe salvation is their reward. Paul teaches the clear **distinction** between salvation's **irrevocable gift** and **contingent eternal rewards**, based on testing of works at Christ's Judgment Seat.

10. The last **distinction** ought to be the first: The **distinction** between true believers and merely professing believers. The wheat and the tares continue together until the end, with the tares undetected until the harvest.<sup>10</sup> While we are never permitted to judge if another soul is saved, **we are called** in Acts 17:11 to **compare teaching & belief to the truth of God's Word.**

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<sup>6</sup> Instead, **Job 35:13** and **36:13** describe a debit, not an accrual to the accounts of lost souls.

<sup>7</sup> Scofield aptly critiques in **Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth**, p. 40, "It was reserved for modern [scientists of the Law] to wrench these holy and just **but deathful tables** (Ten Commandments) from underneath the mercy-seat and the atoning blood, and erect them in Christian churches as the rule of Christian life." Christ's mercy-seat rests **upon** the foundation of His Law, and is covered by His blood poured down from the Cross. **The Law is not held up as the standard**; it is the lifting up of Christ and that lifting looking back to Moses lifting the brass serpent in the wilderness that draws all men to Him. (See John 3:14, 12:32). This **distinction** is vitally key.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>9</sup> **Galatians 2:20** "...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...the life...I now live in the flesh I live by faith.

<sup>10</sup> To understand of this mixing together of the saved and the lost see **Gen 4:3-5**, **Ex 12:38**, **Num 11:4-6**, **Neh 7:63-65**, **13:1-3**, **Matt 13:24-30**, **37-43**, **2 Cor 11:13-15**, **Gal 2:4** and **2 Pet 2:1-2**.