

# RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE BIBLE

- I. God's Commandment to **STUDY** and **RIGHTLY DIVIDE**. - 2 Tim. 2:15
  - A. **Every verse in the Bible has three applications:**
    - 1) Historical 2) Doctrinal (sometimes Prophetic) 3) Practical (Spiritual)
  - B. **Basic OT Divisions:** Creation of the world, God's earliest dealings with mankind, God's selection of the nation of Israel (the Jews) starting with Abraham, and the history of the nation of Israel until the birth of Jesus Christ.
  - C. **Basic NT Divisions:** The earthly ministry of Jesus Christ primarily to the Jews, His crucifixion, the Church Age, the Tribulation, the Millennium, and Eternity Future.
  - D. **NOTE:** New Testament divisions are to be understood by the **three groups** of people mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:32 as clarified by Rom. 3:22, 10:12, Eph. 3:3-9, 4:4-5, 5:32.
  
- II. Divisions (Time Periods or "Dispensations") in the Scriptures
  1. **Innocence** (during which God gave Adam but one commandment to keep - Gen. 2:17)
  2. **Conscience** (ends with the flood of Noah's day)
  3. **Law** - Unofficial - Gen. 9; Official - Ex. 20 (Until John the Baptist - Luke 16:16)
  4. **Jesus Christ Ministering on Earth** - (Law is still in effect, ends at crucifixion)
  5. **Church Age** → Salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ (ends at the Rapture)
  6. **Tribulation** (7 year period starting sometime after the Rapture of the Church)
  7. **Millennium** (1000-year "Kingdom of Heaven" reign of Jesus Christ on the earth)
  8. **Eternity Future** (A "new beginning" no sin is possible, and time shall be no more)
  
- III. Transitional Book Divisions
  - A. The book of **Matthew** is a transitional book, which transitions **from** the Old Testament **to** the New Testament, the transition point being the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary in Matt. 27. Cf. Heb. 9:14-17
  - B. The book of **Acts** is a transitional book where the emphasis is transferred **from** the history of Israel **to** the history of the Church. God focuses on the Jews in the early part of the book through the preaching of Peter, and then God focuses on the Gentiles in the latter part of the book through the preaching of Paul. **NOTE:** Paul's epistles come next in the Bible starting with Romans through Philemon. (Paul most likely also wrote Hebrews.)
  - C. The book of **Hebrews** is a transitional book **from** the Church Age **to** the Tribulation, and is doctrinally aimed at the Jews. The book of James is also written doctrinally to the Jews (notice James 1:1 "...to the twelve tribes..." → those are Jews!). 1 and 2 Peter through Jude are General Epistles applying to Jews, Gentiles, and the Church, while the book of Revelation is **primarily** dealing with the Jews in the Tribulation.
  
- IV. Divisions Relating to Jesus' Ministry on Earth
  - A. Matt. 5:22 - There is no such thing as a "council" today in the Church Age that anybody faces for saying to his brother "Raca."
  - B. **Contrast** calling somebody a "**fool**" (and who does it) in different dispensations. - Matt. 5:22 (Law), Matt. 23:17 (Law), 19 (Law), Luke 12:20 (Law), and Luke 24:25 (Law) with Paul speaking in 1 Cor. 15:36 (Church Age).
  - C. Matt. 5:29-30 - Nobody escapes hell today in the Church Age by plucking out your right eye or cutting off your right hand.
  - D. Matt. 5:42 - No Christian today gives up everything he owns to whoever asks for it.
  - E. Matt. 10:1-6 - Jesus' primary ministry while he was on the earth was to the **Jews**.
  - F. John 3:3-7 - Contrast **physical** birth versus **spiritual** birth. (Context **IS NOT** baptism!)

G. Matt. 6:10 - Believers today who rightly divide the Bible are **not** praying "...Thy kingdom come..." apart from praying for the return of Jesus Christ **first** to set up the circumstances to usher in that Kingdom, i.e the Kingdom of Heaven). - 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:14-15; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13

H. The **Sermon on the Mount** (Matt. 5-7) has many **practical applications** for believers to learn from today and teaches us much about living the Christian life. **Doctrinally**, however, the **Sermon on the Mount** is the Constitution for the Millennium, and **is not** where we find the **Plan of Salvation** for us today in the Church Age.

## V. Present Church Age

A. Doctrinally, we need to pay special attention to the **Paul's Epistles** (Romans through Philemon) since Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles (which we are). - Rom. 11:13

B. **Faith alone in Jesus Christ** as the **sole means** of salvation for the Church Age was revealed to Paul. - Gal. 3:22-26

C. Example: **Contrast** the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:16-22 who was talking with Jesus during the 4<sup>th</sup> dispensation (Jesus' ministry on the earth, **prior** to Calvary) with Gentile salvation by faith alone during the Church Age in Acts 13:39, 15:9-11; 16:30-31, Rom. 3:20, 4:5, 5:1, 10:13; Gal. 2:15, 3:24; Col. 2:11-13, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, etc.

D. We must **rightly divide SPIRIT BAPTISM** → Acts 1:5; Rom. 6:1-4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:11-12 from **WATER (OR OTHER) BAPTISM** →

1) 1 Cor. 10:1-2 - Moses' baptism under the cloud and through the Red Sea;

2) John 1:31-34 - John's water baptism to manifest Christ to Israel; 3) Matt. 20:22-23 - the baptism of physical suffering, 4) Acts 2:38 - Peter's water baptism for Israel,

5) Acts 18:8 - water baptism - Gentile believers, 6) Matt. 3:11 - baptism of the lost in fire.

## VI. We must rightly divide God's righteousness from man's righteousness, by understanding:

1) **Position** vs. **Practice** and 2) **Salvation** vs. **Service (Discipleship, Fellowship, etc.)**

A. Compare Ezek. 18:21-24 with John 8:23-24 and Gal. 5:16-17

B. Believers today are sealed and cannot lose their salvation. - Eph. 1:12-13; 4:29-30;

C. **Carnal** believers walk after the flesh, but are **still saved**. - 1 Cor. 3:1-3; 11-15

D. **Carnal** believers can **forget** they have been purged from all their sins. - 2 Peter 1:4-9

E. Believers are **secure** in the love of God. - Rom. 10:9-19; John 1:12; Rom. 8:35-39

## VII. Bible Study Tips

A. **Compare and contrast** verses with the same/similar words and phrases. - 1 Cor. 2:13

B. The KJB **defines** all of its own terms. Some examples:

1. Define: "propitiation" - (Used 3X in KJB) Rom. 3:21-26 (FM); 1 John 2:2; 4:10

2. Compare & Contrast: Prov. 4:24 cf. 6:12-14; 6:2, 4; 9:8; 17:4, 21; 19:9 cf. 19:5

3. Matt. 6:22-23 - The word "single" would be defined as **the opposite** of "evil" (pure or good), because "evil" is **contrasted** against "single."

C. The KJB is **self-interpreting**, e.g. Ex. 20:13 says "Thou shalt not kill." Christ interprets this verse in Matt. 19:18 as "...Thou shalt do no murder..." Therefore, the proper **scriptural interpretation** is that killing someone 1) in self-defense or 2) in time of war is **not condemned by the Scriptures**, since in these cases killing is not murder.

D. Practically speaking, we can apply **whatever** we find **anywhere** in the Bible to ourselves **individually** if there is a New Testament principle for us in the Church Age.

For example, in Psalms 5:1-3, David is praying to God and since prayer is a New Testament command (Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 5:17) we ought also to pray as he did.

However, in Psalm 109, David is praying for vengeance against his enemies; **contrast** this with the Church Age command to pray for and bless our enemies. - Rom. 12:14-21