

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE FELLOWSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE



LESSON 4

Please memorize 2 Timothy 2:15.

KEY TO THE BIBLE: RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

The story is often told of a man who had a peculiar method of studying his Bible. Each morning, with his eyes closed, he would open the Bible to a page at random. Then, with his eyes still closed, he would run his finger over the page and stop. He would read the verse where his finger had landed and take it as his instruction from God for the day.

For a time nothing unusual happened. Then one morning he opened his eyes and at the place where his finger had come to rest he read the words concerning Judas in Matthew 27:5, “and he went away and hanged himself”

Thinking that perhaps this was not good advice our friend repeated his procedure. This time his finger stopped on Luke 10:37 where he read, “go and do the same.” He decided to make a third attempt and so, closing his eyes once again, he opened his Bible to yet another page, ran his finger across the verses and stopped. This time he opened his eyes to read in John 13:27, “What you do. do quickly.”

Clearly the man in our story needed a better system for studying the Word of God.

The Bible has a system and structure to it. In the last lesson we discussed 7 principles for studying the Bible.

1. Only those who know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior can fully understand the Bible.
2. The Holy Spirit who indwells all believers helps us to understand the Bible.
3. The Holy Spirit brings understanding to those who are willing to obey.
4. The Lord Jesus Christ and his death on the cross for us is the central truth of the Bible.
5. Statements in the Bible must be understood in the context in which they are made.
6. Interpret the Bible literally.
7. Rightly divide the word of truth, i.e. recognize the important divisions of scripture.

In this lesson we will consider more fully principle number 7, “Rightly dividing the word of truth.”

1. For some enjoyable, yet important information, please read through the booklet included with this lesson entitled, “Key to the Bible.” _____ (Check when read)
2. Refer to our memory verse for this lesson, (2 Tim. 2:15). According to the last part of the verse, what is necessary for the workman who does not want to be ashamed? _____

The term “word of truth,” is a reference to the Bible.” The words “rightly dividing” in the King James Version, or correctly handling” in the New International Version, come from a Greek word whose parts mean literally “to cut straight.”

The central idea in 2 Tim. 2:15 is that the student of the Bible should be careful to understand it properly and work hard to teach it accurately. To “rightly divide” also has the idea of recognizing the basic parts or divisions of the Bible. In order to understand the scriptures, we must recognize the different parts and the way in which they fit together.

Some of the divisions of scripture are already familiar to us. For example we have the Old Testament, the 39 books from Genesis to Malachi, and the New Testament, the 27 books from Matthew to Revelation. Other divisions of the Bible have to do with specific people.

3. The earliest chapters of the Bible have as their central figure the man, “Adam.” What important person do we meet Genesis 6? _____
4. (Gen. 12:1-4) Beginning with Genesis 12 another man appears who is very important to the plan of God. What is his name? _____

The promises given to Abraham were passed to his son Isaac and then to Isaac’s son Jacob whose name was changed by God to Israel. Thus, a nation was born.

5. One of the most significant Old Testament figures is Moses. We read of him beginning in Exodus. Please read Exodus chapters 1-3 for background concerning Moses. _____ (Check)
6. Exodus 2:1-10 describes the way in which the baby Moses was saved from execution. What did his mother do when she saw that she could no longer hide him? _____

(vs. 10) Who adopted Moses and raised him as her own son? _____
7. (Ex. 2:11-15) What incident forced Moses to flee from Egypt? _____
8. (Ex. 3:1-4) After 40 years God was ready to send Moses back to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from slavery. How did God appear to Moses out in the desert? _____
9. After a series of confrontations which, included many plagues, Pharaoh allowed Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. This story is told in Exodus 4-14. Please read. _____ (Check)
10. (Ex. 14:21,22) What happened when the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea? _____

11. (vv. 26-28) What happened when the Egyptians attempted to cross? _____

When the nation of Israel went into Egypt it numbered only 75 people according to Acts 7:14. Some 400 years later, when Moses led Israel out of bondage in Egypt and across the Red Sea, their number was over 2 million. Moses was not only used of God to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt, but through Moses God gave Israel her law. It is the Law of Moses (or the law given through Moses) which is the basis for God's dealings with that nation.

12. For the story of the giving of the law to Israel please read Exodus 19-23. _____ (Check)
13. (Exodus 20:1-17) The so-called "Ten Commandments" were in reality a small part of Israel's law. There were many more than ten. However the Ten Commandments are a good representation of what the entire law contains. From the references below which are taken from Exodus 20, list each of the Ten Commandments.

- (v. 3) _____
- (v. 4) _____
- (v. 7) _____
- (v. 8) _____
- (v. 12) _____
- (v. 13) _____
- (vs. 14) _____
- (vs. 15) _____
- (vs. 16) _____
- (vs. 17) _____
- _____

As believers today and not part of Old Testament Israel, we are not under the Law of Moses. Paul, writing in the New Testament, makes it clear that we are under grace and not under the Mosaic Law. There is value, however, in studying the Mosaic Law and the Ten Commandments. In a general way they represent universal moral laws of God for all times and are an excellent guide to conduct. The writings of Paul in the New Testament apply directly to believers in our day. It is important to recognize that the moral principles of the Ten Commandments are repeated in Paul's epistles. The one exception is the keeping of Saturday as a Sabbath Day. Christians in this age of grace are not obligated to keep a Sabbath. It is customary to come together for worship on the first day of the week because that was the practice of the earliest believers in Christ.

The moral principles of the Law of Moses tend to represent universal principles (that is, principles which are always applicable). When we find those principles again in the New Testament we know that God wants us to be obedient. We are not, however, bound to follow the Old Testament law. This law was given to govern Israel.

14. (Exodus 20:24) What command was given to Israel? _____

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15. (Leviticus 19:27, 28) What command is given to Israel in each of these verses?

(V. 27) _____

(v. 28) _____

16. (Numbers 15:32-36) What happened to the man who broke the law by gathering on the Sabbath? _____

17. (Numbers 15:38) What were the sons of Israel to do? _____

With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the dawning of the “Age of Grace” believers are no longer bound to the “Law of Moses.”

18. (Galatians 3:24,25) According to the first part of vs. 24, what was the law compared to? _____

(v. 25) Now that faith has come are we under this “tutor” or “schoolmaster?” _____

19. (Ephesians 2:15) Here the Mosaic Law is referred to as the “enmity which is the law of commandments.” What has Christ done to this law according to the first part of the verse? _____

The scripture’s teaching concerning the Law of Moses illustrates an important principle.

GOD NEVER CHANGES.
THE MORAL REQUIREMENTS OF GOD NEVER CHANGE.
BUT...
THE SYSTEM BY WHICH GOD GOVERNS THE WORLD HAS CHANGED
AT VARIOUS TIMES OVER THE COURSE OF HISTORY.

We have just seen that once God worked through the nation of Israel and governed them through the Law of Moses. Today, however, God is not working directly through Israel as a nation but through the Church, the Body of Christ. Christians are not obligated to keep the Law of Moses.

In the previous lesson we saw that God’s commandments concerning diet have changed since the beginning of the world. Adam was to be a vegetarian (Gen. 1:29). After the flood any kind of meat was allowed (Gen. 9:3,4). During Moses’ time under the Law, only certain kinds of meat could be eaten (See Leviticus 11). During our time, the “Age of Grace,” every creature of God is good (1 Tim. 4:4).

To “rightly divide the word of truth,” is to study the scriptures in light of this principle.

This is the principle of the dispensations.

This is rightly dividing the word of truth.

When you study the Bible always ask these questions:

Who is speaking?

To whom is he speaking?

What is he speaking about?

When was it spoken?

20. (Deuteronomy 1:1-5) Please read. _____ (Check)

(v. 1) Who is speaking? _____

(v. 1) To whom is he speaking? _____

(v. 3) About what is he speaking? _____

(v. 4) When is he speaking? _____

21. (1 Corinthians 1:1-3) Please read. _____ (Check)

(v. 1) Who is speaking? _____

(v. 2) To whom is he speaking? _____

In 1 Corinthians Paul is writing about many issues. What is one of these issues according to 1 Cor. 1:10?
(Use your words) _____

Under which of God’s programs do these words apply? Circle one: When Adam and Eve were in the Garden. Under the Law of Moses. During the Body of Christ. In the future Kingdom.

We will learn in a later lesson that as Moses was God’s great leader and revealer of truth for Old Testament Israel, so the Apostle Paul was the revealer of truth for the Church, the Body of Christ.

As Moses received the law from God on Mt. Sinai, so Paul received special revelation from God and gave us truth concerning the Body of Christ

By asking the basic questions about 1 Corinthians, you will discover that this is a portion of scripture written directly to those believers today who live in the Age of Grace and call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To rightly divide the word of truth is to understand which portions of scripture are written directly to us, the Body of Christ, and which portions are written to someone else.

**ALL OF THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN FOR US, BUT NOT
ALL OF IT WAS WITHIN DIRECTLY TO US.**

OTHER DISTINCTIONS IN SCRIPTURE

The Messianic Kingdom is distinct from the Church, the Body of Christ. God promised Abraham that his descendants would form a great nation through which all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:2,3). This promise, called the Abrahamic Covenant, was inherited first by Isaac (Gen. 26:3), then by Jacob who became Israel. (Gen. 27:27-29; 28:13-15). During the course of Israel's history, the promise became more specific. Through the covenant made by God with David (2 Sam. 7:16) his dynasty would rule in the Messianic Kingdom.

The Old Testament prophets also add much detail concerning life on earth during the Messianic Kingdom

22. Isaiah 11:1-10 is one example of an Old Testament truth which describes the future Messianic Kingdom. (Vs. 6) What will be true in this Kingdom? _____

23. (Luke 1:31-33) According to these verses, what position would Jesus Christ occupy? _____

Under the Kingdom program Israel is the primary nation. Israel was to obey God. God would bless Israel and the nations of the earth would be drawn to God through Israel.

However, Israel rejected her messiah. Now God has temporarily set Israel and the Kingdom program aside. Today, the people of God are the church, the Body of Christ.

24. (Rom. 11:25) What has now happened to Israel? _____

25. (Ephesians 2:14-16) What has Christ done with the two groups, Israel and the Gentiles? _____

According to Gal. 3:28 there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ. Israel was under the Kingdom program, and the Body of Christ is under the dispensation of the grace of God. These are separate entities.

THERE IS ALSO A DISTINCTION IN SCRIPTURE BETWEEN PROPHECY AND MYSTERY.

The prophet was a man who spoke directly from God. Some prophecies were really sermons meant for the people in the day in which the prophet lived.

Other prophecies foretold the future. Old Testament prophets spoke a great deal about the coming Messiah, coming judgments upon the world, and the Messianic Kingdom which is yet future.

26. (1 Peter 1:10-12) According to verse 11, what did the Old Testament prophets speak of? _____

27. Look up Acts 3:21. What period did God speak of through the prophets? _____

The Old Testament prophets spoke of the Messiah, his death for our sins, his Kingdom, and the restoration of the nation of Israel. There were some things of which the prophets never spoke. These were “mysteries”, not revealed until New Testament times.

28. (Ephesians 3:1-10) Please read. _____(Check)
29. According to verse 3, what was made known to Paul? _____
30. What does Paul teach about this mystery in the first part of verse 5? (See also Colossians 1:26.) _____

The truths concerning Israel and the Kingdom were prophesied in the Old Testament. Truths concerning the church, the Body of Christ, were never prophesied until they were revealed to the Apostle Paul.

All of the Bible is important to us. However, God’s commands for the Church, the Body of Christ are found in Paul’s epistles. These writings are of special importance to us.

31 Please read carefully Ephesians 3:1,2. What did God give to Paul? (v. 2) _____

For whom did God give it to Paul? _____

32. Refer to Galatians 1:15,16. What did God send Paul to do? (v. 16) _____

33. (Colossians 1:24-29) Please read. _____ (check)
(v. 25) What did God give to Paul and why? _____

To rightly divide the word is to understand the various parts of scripture and how they fit together. This will greatly help determine which are written directly to the Body of Christ.

C. I Scofield in his reference Bible has well-stated: “In his (Paul’s) writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the Church.”

In the space below please write out the memory verse for this lesson, 2 Timothy 2:15.

Use the space below to ask any questions or makes any comments about theses lessons you wish.

☐ I would like to be contacted by a minister in my area that can help me better understand God's Word. If checked please include a telephone number _____

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