

## **Rightly Dividing the Ages**

### **Dispensational Truth Without the Denominational Blender**

#### **Introduction**

The Bible is not a pile of religious sayings tossed into a bag for every preacher, denomination, pope, professor, cult leader, or YouTube prophet to shake up and pull from whenever he needs a proof text. The Bible is a divine revelation from God, written through holy men, preserved for His people, and arranged in such a way that the student is commanded to study it properly. Paul did not tell Timothy merely to read, feel, guess, spiritualize, or emotionally apply the Scriptures. He told him, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God.” That means there is a right way to handle the Book and a wrong way to handle the Book. The approved workman rightly divides it. The ashamed workman does not.

Dispensational truth simply means recognizing the different ways God has dealt with men in different times according to His revealed will. The word “dispensation” is Bible language, not a denominational invention. Paul speaks of “a dispensation of the gospel” in 1 Corinthians 9:17, “the dispensation of the fulness of times” in Ephesians 1:10, “the dispensation of the grace of God” in Ephesians 3:2, and the dispensation given to him “to fulfil the word of God” in Colossians 1:25. A dispensation is a stewardship, an administration, a revealed order of responsibility. God never changes in His nature, holiness, righteousness, mercy, or truth, but He has not given every man in every age the same commands, ordinances, promises, signs, hopes, covenants, and revelations.

The disaster of modern religion is that it takes what God separated and glues it together with tradition. It steals Israel’s promises, drags the Church into the Tribulation, puts the sinner back under Moses, makes water baptism part of the new birth, turns the Sermon on the Mount into the plan of salvation, confuses the gospel of the kingdom with the gospel of the grace of God, and then calls the confusion “historic Christianity.” But God is not the author of confusion. The Bible makes sense when it is believed where it stands, in its own context, addressed to the people God addressed, under the conditions God gave, and fulfilled in the program God intended.

#### **I. The Command to Rightly Divide**

**Key Text:** 2 Timothy 2:15

**Supporting Texts:** Nehemiah 8:8; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:16

The foundation of dispensational truth is not a chart, a theologian, or a system. The foundation is a commandment. “Rightly dividing the word of truth” means the word of truth

has divisions placed in it by God, and the Bible student is responsible to recognize them. You do not create the divisions. You find them. You do not impose them on the Bible. You observe them in the Bible. The problem is not that dispensationalists divide the Bible. The problem is that most people refuse to divide what God already divided.

Nehemiah 8:8 says, "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." That is what Bible preaching should do. Read it distinctly. Give the sense. Cause understanding. A preacher is not called to make the Bible sound mystical when God made it plain. He is not called to flatten every passage into the same application. He is not called to make Moses, David, Peter, Paul, Israel, the Church, the Tribulation saints, and the millennial nations all preach the exact same message under the exact same conditions. That is not Bible study. That is theological laziness dressed up in religious vocabulary.

Peter warned that some of Paul's writings contain "some things hard to be understood," which unstable men wrest "unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). That does not mean Paul is false. It means Paul has revelation that must be handled carefully. Paul received truth about the Body of Christ, the dispensation of grace, the mystery, the one new man, and the Church's heavenly position. If a man refuses Paul's distinctive ministry, he will eventually twist the whole Bible into a knot and then blame the Bible for being difficult.

### **Main Truth:**

Right division is not optional decoration for advanced students. It is the basic rule for approved Bible work.

## **II. The Three Classes God Tells You to Recognize**

**Key Text:** 1 Corinthians 10:32

**"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."**

One of the simplest keys to the whole Bible is found in 1 Corinthians 10:32. God names three groups: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God. Ignore that verse, and you will spend the rest of your life stealing mail from somebody else's mailbox. The Jew is not the Gentile. The Gentile is not the Church. The Church is not Israel. These groups overlap historically at times, but they are not identical in calling, covenant, hope, responsibility, or prophetic destiny.

The Jew begins with Abraham and is developed through Isaac, Jacob, the twelve tribes, Moses, the covenants, the land, the throne, the temple, the priesthood, the prophets, and the promises. Romans 9:4 says that to Israel pertain "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." That is not

said of the Body of Christ. Israel has earthly promises connected to a land, a kingdom, a throne, a city, a nation, and the reign of Messiah from Jerusalem.

The Church of God, the Body of Christ, is revealed through Paul as one new man made up of saved Jews and Gentiles in Christ. Ephesians 2:15 says Christ made “in himself of twain one new man.” That is not Israel improved. That is not Gentiles becoming spiritual Jews. That is not Rome becoming the new Israel. That is a new creation in Christ. The Church has a heavenly calling, a heavenly position, a heavenly Head, and a blessed hope in the catching away of the saints before the time of Jacob’s trouble.

**Main Truth:**

Much false doctrine dies the moment a man believes 1 Corinthians 10:32.

**III. The Difference Between Prophecy and Mystery**

**Key Texts:** Acts 3:21; Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:4–6

Peter preached things “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). Paul preached “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16:25). Those two statements are not the same. One was spoken since the world began. The other was kept secret since the world began. If words mean anything, prophecy and mystery cannot be identical.

Prophecy concerns God’s declared program for Israel, the nations, the kingdom, the land, the throne of David, the day of the Lord, the restoration of Israel, the judgment of nations, and the reign of Messiah on earth. The prophets saw the suffering of Christ and the glory that should follow, but they did not unfold the full doctrine of the Body of Christ as revealed to Paul. They did not preach that believing Jews and Gentiles would be baptized by one Spirit into one body with no covenant distinction inside that body.

The mystery concerns truth hidden in God until revealed in due time through Paul. Ephesians 3:5 says it was “not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed.” Colossians 1:26 calls it “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” When churches erase the difference between prophecy and mystery, they turn the Bible into a fog. When they keep the difference clear, the Book opens.

**Main Truth:**

Prophecy is God’s revealed kingdom program. Mystery is God’s hidden Church truth now revealed through Paul.

**IV. The Difference Between Law and Grace**

**Key Texts:** John 1:17; Romans 6:14; Galatians 3:24–25

John 1:17 says, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” That does not mean nobody before the cross ever experienced God’s grace, and it does not mean believers today are lawless rebels. It means Moses and Christ are not the same administration. Sinai and Calvary are not the same ground. Israel under the law and the Church under grace are not operating under the same revealed order.

Romans 6:14 says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” That verse does not need a seminary committee to explain it away. A saved man in the Body of Christ is not under the Mosaic law as his covenant system. He is under grace. His standing is in Christ. His righteousness is Christ. His acceptance is in the Beloved. His life is not regulated by meats, drinks, holy days, new moons, Sabbaths, temple ordinances, animal sacrifices, Levitical priesthood, or national covenant law.

Galatians 3:24–25 says the law was “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” but “after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” Religion keeps trying to drag the believer back into the classroom after graduation. It puts a saved sinner under ordinances Christ fulfilled, ceremonies Christ ended, and shadows Christ replaced. The law can expose sin, but it cannot save the sinner. It can condemn, but it cannot justify. It can point to Christ, but it cannot become Christ.

**Main Truth:**

Grace does not make a believer careless. Grace places him in Christ and teaches him to live from a finished redemption.

**V. The Difference Between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Grace of God**

**Key Texts:** Matthew 10:5–7; Matthew 24:14; Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 15:1–4

The Bible uses the word “gospel” in more than one context. Gospel means good news, but not every announcement of good news contains the same content, audience, timing, or doctrinal requirement. Matthew 10:5–7 says the twelve were told, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles,” and “go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That is not Paul going to the Gentiles preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the finished gospel of grace.

In Acts 20:24, Paul identifies his ministry with “the gospel of the grace of God.” In 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, he defines the gospel by which men are saved today: “how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.” That message rests on a finished cross, an empty tomb, and salvation by

grace through faith apart from works. That is the message committed to Paul for the Church age.

Matthew 24:14 speaks of “this gospel of the kingdom” being preached in all the world before the end comes. That sits in a tribulation context with Israel, the abomination of desolation, Judea, the Sabbath day, endurance to the end, and the coming of the Son of man. A man who mixes Matthew 24 with the Body of Christ will either rob the believer of assurance or drag the Church into Israel’s tribulation. The gospel of grace saves a sinner now by faith in Christ’s finished work. The gospel of the kingdom announces the coming King and kingdom in connection with Israel’s prophetic program.

**Main Truth:**

The gospel of grace is not religious improvement. It is Christ crucified, buried, and risen again for sinners.

**VI. The Difference Between Israel’s Earthly Kingdom and the Church’s Heavenly Calling**

**Key Texts:** Genesis 15:18; 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Luke 1:32–33; Philippians 3:20

God promised Abraham a land. God promised David a throne. God promised Israel a kingdom. Those promises do not vanish because Gentile theologians got tired of reading the Old Testament literally. Genesis 15 gives a land promise. 2 Samuel 7 gives a royal covenant. Luke 1 says Christ will receive “the throne of his father David” and “reign over the house of Jacob for ever.” Those words mean what they say. David’s throne is not a cloud in heaven. The house of Jacob is not a Baptist association. The kingdom promised to Israel is not Rome, Geneva, Canterbury, or Nashville.

The Church’s calling is different. Philippians 3:20 says, “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Colossians 3:1 tells believers to seek “those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” Ephesians places the believer in heavenly places in Christ. The Body of Christ is not waiting to inherit Canaan. It is waiting for the Lord from heaven.

This distinction protects both Israel and the Church. It keeps Israel’s promises from being stolen and spiritualized. It keeps the Church from being shoved into Israel’s prophetic judgments. It keeps the Second Advent distinct from the blessed hope. It keeps the kingdom from being reduced to a social program. It keeps the believer from thinking he is building the kingdom now through politics, culture, sacraments, or denominational expansion.

**Main Truth:**

Israel's hope is earthly and kingdom-centered. The Church's hope is heavenly and Christ-centered.

**VII. The Difference Between the Rapture and the Revelation**

**Key Texts:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Titus 2:13; Revelation 19:11–16; Zechariah 14:4

The blessed hope of the Church is not the Antichrist. It is not the mark of the beast. It is not the abomination of desolation. It is not fleeing Judea. It is not enduring Daniel's seventieth week. Titus 2:13 says believers are "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In 1 Thessalonians 4, the Lord descends, the dead in Christ rise, living believers are caught up, and the saints meet the Lord in the air. That is comfort. Paul says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The Revelation of Christ is different. Revelation 19 shows Christ returning in judgment with armies following Him. Zechariah 14 says His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives. Matthew 24 shows the Son of man coming after tribulation. The rapture catches the Church up. The Second Advent brings Christ down to earth. The rapture is connected with the Body of Christ and heavenly deliverance. The Revelation is connected with Israel, judgment, the nations, and the establishment of the kingdom.

When these events are mixed, the Church loses its comfort, Israel loses its prophetic context, and prophecy becomes a battlefield of confusion. The believer is not waiting for the Beast to reveal himself. He is waiting for Christ. The Church is not appointed to wrath. The Body of Christ is removed before God resumes His direct dealings with Israel in the time of Jacob's trouble.

**Main Truth:**

The Church is looking for Christ from heaven, not Antichrist from the earth.

**VIII. The Difference Between Doctrinal Application and Spiritual Application**

**Key Texts:** Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6; 2 Timothy 3:16

Right division does not mean throwing away parts of the Bible. It means putting every part in its proper place. All Scripture is profitable, but all Scripture is not doctrinally addressed to the same people under the same program. Romans 15:4 says things written aforetime were written for our learning. That means Leviticus, Joshua, Psalms, Isaiah, Matthew, Hebrews, James, and Revelation all matter. The question is not whether they are inspired. The question is how they apply.

A Christian can learn from Noah without building an ark. He can learn from Abraham without offering Isaac. He can learn from Moses without keeping the Passover as a covenant ordinance. He can learn from David without sitting on Israel's throne. He can learn from Peter without pretending Acts 2:38 is Paul's gospel formula to the Gentiles. He can learn from James without making works the ground of justification before God in the Church age. Right division preserves the whole Bible while preventing doctrinal theft.

Every passage has a setting. Someone is speaking. Someone is being addressed. Something is happening in history. A doctrine is being taught in context. A spiritual application can be drawn after the doctrinal setting is honored. The lazy preacher skips the setting and jumps straight into application. The faithful workman lets the Bible stand first, then applies it honestly.

**Main Truth:**

All Scripture is for us, but not all Scripture is directly to us or about us.

**IX. Why Dispensational Truth Matters Practically**

Dispensational truth matters because doctrine shapes faith, assurance, worship, preaching, missions, prophecy, and Christian living. A confused Bible produces a confused Christian. If a man thinks he can lose salvation every time he sins, he will never enjoy the peace of Romans 5:1. If he thinks the Church must go through the Tribulation, he will not properly rejoice in the blessed hope. If he thinks Israel has been replaced, he will misread prophecy. If he thinks water baptism saves, he will corrupt the gospel of grace. If he thinks the Sermon on the Mount is the new birth, he will turn salvation into impossible performance.

Right division protects the finished work of Christ. It shows the sinner that salvation today is by grace through faith, not by sacraments, law-keeping, endurance, church membership, priestcraft, confession booths, altar rituals, or religious systems. Ephesians 2:8–9 remains clear: “For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works, lest any man should boast.” The gospel is not “do your best and hope God understands.” The gospel is Christ died for your sins, was buried, and rose again the third day.

Right division also gives the believer confidence in the Bible. Instead of fearing contradictions, he learns to identify transitions. Instead of forcing every passage into the same mold, he lets God speak according to context. Instead of panicking over hard verses, he studies. The Book becomes clearer. The plan of God becomes more majestic. The believer sees how God has dealt with man from creation to the fall, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, from Christ to Paul, from the Church age to the Tribulation, from the Second Advent to the Millennium, and from the Millennium to eternity.

**Main Truth:**

Right division does not weaken Bible faith. It strengthens it.

**Conclusion**

Dispensational truth is not an excuse to avoid Scripture. It is the method that allows Scripture to speak correctly. The Bible believer does not need to apologize for making distinctions God Himself made. God separated Israel from the nations. God gave Moses the law. God promised David a throne. God sent Christ to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. God revealed the mystery through Paul. God formed the Body of Christ. God promised the Church a heavenly hope. God will restore Israel. God will judge the nations. God will reign through Jesus Christ on the earth. God will gather all things together in Christ in “the dispensation of the fulness of times.”

The question is not whether a man owns a Bible. The question is whether he handles it as an approved workman. A man can quote verses all day and still mishandle the Book. The devil quoted Scripture to Jesus Christ in Matthew 4, but he quoted it with wicked intent and wrong application. False teachers do not always deny the Bible. Many times they misuse it. They put the wrong verse on the wrong sinner in the wrong age under the wrong covenant and then call the wreckage “doctrine.” Right division keeps the Bible student from becoming a religious pickpocket, stealing verses from Israel, stealing ordinances from Moses, stealing signs from the apostles, and stealing judgments from the Tribulation.

The final issue is Jesus Christ. Every age, every covenant, every promise, every prophecy, every mystery, every sacrifice, every kingdom hope, every heavenly blessing, and every eternal purpose finds its center in Him. Dispensational truth is not about worshiping charts. It is about honoring God’s revelation as He gave it. The approved workman studies, believes, compares Scripture with Scripture, and refuses to let tradition erase the words on the page. When the Bible is rightly divided, Christ is magnified, the gospel is clarified, Israel is preserved, the Church is understood, prophecy is opened, and the believer stands on solid ground.

**Final Call**

The sinner does not need a denomination. He needs a Saviour. The guilty man does not need a religious system. He needs the blood of Jesus Christ. The confused believer does not need another fog machine from the pulpit. He needs the Book opened, divided rightly, and preached plainly. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

**Closing Verse:**

**Acts 16:31** — “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

**Closing Statement:**

When the Bible is rightly divided, the gospel is no longer buried under religion, Israel is no longer robbed by theology, the Church is no longer dragged into wrath, and Jesus Christ receives the glory that belongs to Him.

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