

# enjoy the bible

A condensed version of  
Part 1 of  
"HOW TO ENJOY THE BIBLE"  
by  
Ethelbert W. Bullinger, D.D.

first published in 1907

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## INTRODUCTION TO THIS EDITION



Dr Ethelbert William Bullinger (1837-1913) was a highly respected preacher and author.

He wrote “How to Enjoy the Bible” because he believed that to really enjoy the Bible it was necessary to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

He was not the first to discover these truths, but his book brought them to a wider audience. The Bible he mainly used was the Authorized or King James Version. Although recognized as having a great influence on the English speaking world, it is also known that it is an inconsistent version. He did not have the benefit of modern translations, especially the Concordant Literal Version.

The Concordant Literal Version is used in this edition. Details of this version and its advantages are found in the Appendix. Those parts of his book which have become redundant because of more accurate translation have largely been omitted. He recognized the value of a literal version, but he told the chief compiler of the CLV, Mr A E Knoch, that he was too old to work on such a long-term task.

The principles Dr Bullinger wrote about in 1907 are important. Although Dr Bullinger’s work has been condensed and completely revised, it has not been amended to conform to teachings foreign to the original. However, the study of God’s Word is a lifelong pursuit, so it is not surprising that some of Dr Bullinger’s ideas changed in later life. Further study has led others, also, to question some points.

In the original edition of this book, some footnotes referred to works written by Dr Bullinger and others. In this version, these are listed in the Appendix.

Our purpose is to provide a condensed edition of his monumental work, which we hope will be of value today, especially to new believers.

Study the scriptures with the insights provided in this book and begin to ENJOY GOD’S HOLY WORD.

**DR. BULLINGER** explained why he wrote his book:

*“Not on bread alone shall the human live, for by every utterance from the mouth of Yahweh shall the human live” (Deut 8:3).*

Just as we need physical food for good physical health, so we need spiritual food for good spiritual health. It is well recognized that proper diet is essential to natural nutrition and growth. A low condition of spiritual health is produced by improper feeding or neglect of necessary food, which is the Word of God.

One reason for a bad spiritual diet is that the Bible is not understood. Philip said to the eunuch, who was reading the prophet Isaiah, “Consequently, you surely know what you are reading!” The answer came, “For how should I be able, if ever someone should not be guiding me?”

Failing to understand the scriptures we cease to feed on them, hence we lean on ‘doctrines of men’ and finally reach a theological desert. The cloud which rests over intelligent study of the scriptures is the same today as with the Jews of old. “You invalidate the Word of God because of your traditions” (Matt 15:6). What prompted me to write this book was a conversation I had with two new Christians in 1905. We studied together much of what is contained in this book. I realized that what helped this couple, would also help many others.

My prayer is that the same Spirit that inspired the words in the scriptures of truth may also inspire them in the heart of my readers.

Like Ezra of old, our desire is to *open the book* and let it speak for itself.

Work carefully through the book with Bible in hand, in order to verify the statements put forward. Make notes. This may be done individually; but better still in small classes. Each will profit by mutual study and conversation.

May the Lord deign to use these pages and make them a guide to a better understanding and a greater enjoyment of His Word.

*(Adapted from Dr. Bullinger’s Preface, Introduction and Preliminary Remarks.)*

## THE ONE GREAT OBJECT OF THE WORD

The one great object of the Word is to reveal God and His will to us. The 'Word' refers to the Living Word (the Lord Jesus Christ) and the written Word (the scriptures of truth). The Greek word *logos* (meaning spoken or written word) is used of both. The Logos makes manifest and reveals to us what cannot be seen. It is used of Christ because He reveals the invisible God. "God no one has ever seen. The only begotten God, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He unfolds Him" (John 1:18).

When we study the Word of God, we must not treat it as something to interpret. It is not for us to explain Christ. It is Christ's mission to explain God to us, and we must believe Christ.

The Greek word *exegeomai* or 'out-lead' is translated here 'unfold'. The word only occurs in Luke 24:35, John 1:18, Acts 10:8, 15:12,14 and 21:19 and means to lead forth, make known, guide, interpret, reveal, expound, and [as always in the CLV] unfold.

Christ is called the Word of God, then, because He makes known, reveals and explains the Father. The scriptures are called the Word of God because they make known (by the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Word) the Father and the Son.

Not only does the Word reveal God, it also interprets and testifies of Christ. Hence the Holy Spirit is the Interpreter of both God and Christ. The mission of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ (John 16:14) and to show the things of Christ (John 14:26). This is done in the written Word (1 Cor 2:9-14). Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to preach that Word. Thus we have the Word in three manifestations:

### **The Incarnate Word, the Written Word and the preached Word.**

There is no other. Christ reveals the Father. The scriptures reveal Christ. The Spirit reveals both in the written and preached Word (1 Cor 12:7-8).

Speaking to the Father, Christ said, "I have given them Thy Word." It is always *Thy* Word (John 17:8,14,17), never His own or with something else. Nothing was given instead of, or in addition to, that Word. The Word is all-sufficient.

In the scriptures, what is said about the Living Word is also said about the written Word:

#### **CHRIST**

##### **Rev 19:13:**

"His name is called  
THE WORD OF GOD."

##### **John 14:6:**

"I am ... THE TRUTH."

##### **John 6:51:**

"I am the living BREAD... If anyone  
should be eating of this BREAD he  
shall be LIVING for the eon."

#### **SCRIPTURES**

##### **Luke 5:1:**

"The throng is importuning Him and hearing  
THE WORD OF GOD."

##### **John 17:17:**

"Thy Word is TRUTH."

##### **Luke 4:4:**

"It is written, 'Not on BREAD alone shall  
man be LIVING, but by every  
WORD of GOD.'"

We see, then, that the Living Word and the written Word cannot be separated. Hence they cannot be separated in the preaching of the Word. To preach the written word without preaching Christ is not preaching at all. Neither is it done in the power of the Spirit.

How wonderfully does this magnify the preached Word, and show the solemnity of the charge in 2 Tim 4:2, "Preach the Word." We should be careful to uphold the dignity and importance of the written and preached Word.

When Paul went to Thessalonica, he, as his custom was, argued with them from the *scriptures*. His preaching consisted in setting forth that

*"Christ must suffer and rise from among the dead"* (Acts 17: 1-7).

When we study the Word and words of God it is to hear His voice. We choose the 'good part' and hear His word (Luke 10:39). But that is only the beginning. The best is to come, when we shall "behold His glory" (John 17:24). Our glorified Lord will continue the work he began as our risen Lord. He will "expound in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" and will declare and make known the Father to the saints (2 Thess 1:10, 2:1).

## THE ONE GREAT SUBJECT OF THE WORD

The one great subject running through the whole Word of God is Christ. He is the key to the divine revelation in the Word and apart from Him it cannot be understood.

*In the Old Testament* we have the King and the kingdom in promise and prophecy, illustration and type.

*In the four gospels* they are presented and proclaimed by John the Baptist, and by Christ Himself.

*In the Acts of the Apostles* we have the transition from the kingdom to the Church. The kingdom is offered once again to Israel by Peter; again it is rejected. Stephen is stoned, and Peter imprisoned. Paul, on the final rejection of his testimony of the kingdom, pronounces for the third and last time the sentence of judicial blindness (Isaiah 6:9) and declares that “the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles” (Acts 28: 25-28).

To *Hebrew* believers it is written that while in God's counsels all things have been put under Christ's feet, “yet now we are *not yet* seeing all subject to Him.” (Heb 2: 7-9). The kingdom thenceforth is in abeyance.

*In the Epistles*, we have the King exalted and (while the kingdom is in abeyance) made Head over all things to the Church. This present interval is the dispensation of the grace of God.

*In the Apocalypse*, we have the revelation of the King in judgement. We see the kingdom set up, the promise fulfilled and prophecy ended.

This can be seen in the following structure:

A The King and the kingdom in promise and prophecy	(The Old Testament)
B The King presented, proclaimed and rejected	(The Four Gospels)
The Mysteries (or secrets) of the king revealed	(Matt 13:11,34,35)
C Transitional	(The Acts)
The kingdom again offered and rejected.	(The earlier Pauline Epistles)
B The king exalted and made Head over all things to the Church “which is His body, the complement of the One completing the all in all”	(Eph 1:22,23)
The great Mystery revealed	(The later Pauline Epistles)
The kingdom in abeyance	(Hebrews 2:8)
A The King and the kingdom unveiled. The king enthroned and the kingdom set up with Divine judgement, power and glory	(Rev 19-20)
Promise and prophecy fulfilled	(The Apocalypse)

This shows the connection between the five parts:

In A and A we have the King and the kingdom.

In B and B we have the King and the secrets of the kingdom.

In C, at the centre, we have the present interval, while the King is absent, the Holy Spirit present, and the kingdom in abeyance, and the mystery of the Church revealed.

From Genesis 3:15 to Revelation 22, “The Coming One” fills our vision.

*Christ's coming has always been the Hope of his people.*

Christ is the promised seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15. All hope for man and for creation is centred in Christ, who is to be born into the world, suffer and die. In resurrection, He becomes the Head of a new creation and finally crushes the head of the old serpent.

In the “fullness of time” He came; but having been rejected and slain He rose from the dead, and ascended to Heaven. There He is “seated” and “waiting furthermore till his enemies may be placed as a footstool for His feet” (Heb 10:13).

Hence, Christ is the *pneuma* or life-giving spirit of the written Word, without which the written Word is dead. “As the body apart from the *pneuma* is dead” (James 2:26) so the written Word apart from the *pneuma* is dead also. Christ is that *pneuma* or spirit.

This is the whole argument of 2 Corinth 3. This is the reason Christ could say of the scriptures, “They testify concerning Me” (John 1:45, 5:39, Luke 24:44-45).

The scriptures have one great design: to tell of the Coming One. Ordinary events combine with the grandest prophetic visions to testify of Him who fills all scripture. The natural eye of man sees only outward historical details and circumstances. Some appear trifling, some offensive and some unimportant. Yet other things which “angels desire to look into” are passed over in a few words or not at all.

But once the ‘spiritual mind’ sees Christ testified of “in Moses and all the prophets” all assumes a new importance. Trifles which seem hardly worth recording now fill the whole vision and light up the written Word and make it shine with the glory of the divine presence.

The master-key of the scriptures of truth is: “These are they that testify of Me.” When we have found “Him of Whom Moses writes in the Law and the Prophets” (John 1:45), we can understand clearly and explain much that is otherwise difficult.

## THE ONE GREAT REQUIREMENT OF THE WORD

The one great requirement of the Word is to rightly divide the Word. This requirement is stated in 2 Tim 2:15: "Endeavour to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker correctly cutting the Word of Truth."

'Correctly cutting' or 'rightly dividing' in the original Greek, is *orthomounta*, from *ortho* 'right' and *temo* 'to cut'. The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament or by any Greek writer. Regardless of man's philosophies or opinions it is clear that the word means to cut. By the very action of cutting one divides something.

This verse plainly teaches:

Our one great aim is to seek God's approval, and not man's.

We are to be diligent in our study.

We are to work so that we have no cause to be ashamed by our labours.

To do all this, we must rightly divide the word of Truth.

Other scriptures show that the "engrafted Word" must be received with meekness (James 1:21). We must hold fast the "faithful word" (Titus 1:9) and hold forth the "Word of Life" (Phil 2:16).

We will now consider four ways of rightly dividing the Word of Truth

As to its LITERARY FORM

As to its SUBJECT MATTER

As to its TIMES AND DISPENSATIONS

As to its DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH AND TEACHING

## RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD:

### LITERARY FORM

The Word comes to us in our English translation. Its literary divisions are, however, human divisions, and are far from being rightly divided.

The Word of God comes in two separate parts: one written originally in Hebrew, the other in Greek. Only in the versions are they bound together in one book. These divisions, of course, are not human, though the names by which they are commonly known are.

Until the second century, the Greeks described the Hebrew Bible as the 'Old Covenant'. The Latin Vulgate called it the '*Vetus Testamentum*' from which our English term 'Old Testament' was taken. The Greek portion became known as the 'New Testament'. Neither of these names is divine in origin.

### THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Although their origin is divine, the human element is apparent. The number, names and order of the books in our versions are not the same as in the Hebrew canon. The changes were made when the Hebrew Bible was first translated into Greek (the Septuagint) in about 280-285 BCE. Its divisions and arrangements of the books have been followed in all later translations.

They were divided into *four* classes:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) The law            | (2) The historical books |
| (3) The poetical books | (4) The prophetic books  |

But the Lord Jesus divided them into *three* classes:

- |            |                  |                |
|------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1) The law | (2) The prophets | (3) The psalms |
|------------|------------------|----------------|

His division was based on the Hebrew Bible extant in His day, not the Septuagint which was also extant then.

The Hebrew canon of 3 divisions contains 24 books:

- (1) The Law (*Torah* the five books of the Pentateuch)  
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- (2) The Prophets (*Neviim*)  
*The Former Prophets*  
Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings  
*The Latter Prophets*  
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel  
The Minor Prophets
- (3) The Psalms (or the {other} writings) (*K'thuvim*)  
The 5 Scrolls (*Megilloth*)  
Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations,  
Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

This is how the books are rightly divided in the Hebrew Bible. Much ingenuity has been exercised in rearranging the books to suit the theories of man. It is probably hopeless to expect versions to follow the order and division of the Hebrew canon, but it is necessary for us to be aware of this information.

The Hebrew text is divided into four forms:

- (1) Into open and closed sections, similar to our paragraphs.
- (2) Into '*sedarim*' or extracts. These portions divide the Pentateuch into 167 'lessons' a 3 years' reading course. There are 452 *sedarim* in the Hebrew Bible.
- (3) The Pentateuch was also divided into 54 '*par'shioth*', so that law was read through once a year.

(4) Verses. Those in the Hebrew Bible are of ancient origin, and were noted by a stroke under the last word of each verse. These words were carefully counted for each book. The scribes were so called because they counted, not because they wrote.

## THE GREEK SCRIPTURES

In the manuscripts, the books are generally in five groups:

- (1) The Gospels
- (2) The Acts
- (3) General Epistles
- (4) Paul's Epistles
- (5) The Apocalypse

The order of these groups varies in certain manuscripts. The order of the books in the groups varies also, except for Paul's epistles. Not one Greek manuscript has yet been seen which has a different order to that in our English Bible. Apart from Paul's Epistles we cannot be dogmatic about the correct order of the other New Testament books.

In the Greek manuscripts there is an indication in the margin of sections divided by the sense. In the second and third centuries, various people divided the text, but they are essentially human in origin.

## THE VERSIONS

### Chapter and verse divisions

Chapter divisions are foreign to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. The chapter divisions of the Hebrew Bible were not of Jewish origin. Not until AD 1330 were the Christian chapters adopted by placing numerals in the margin. In many cases, they agree with the Massoretic divisions of the Hebrew Bible, though there are glaring instances of divergence.

The first use of verse divisions in an English version was the Geneva Bible of 1560, but the verse and numbers do not always correspond with those of the Hebrew Bible.

The chapter and verse divisions of the versions are very modern, human and have no authority. Though they are useful for reference purposes, we must not use them for interpretation or doctrinal teaching. They seldom agree with the breaks required for the structure. Sometimes they break the connection and the sense.

For example, in Genesis 1 and 2, the introduction (1:1-2:3) is broken up and the beginning of the first of the eleven divisions (or 'generations') is hidden. Instead of seeing a separate summary of creation as an introduction, many think they are two distinct creations or a discrepancy between two accounts of the same creation.

Another example is 2 Kings 6 and 7. The break should come after 7:2. In other words, 7:1 and 2 should be 6: 34 and 35.

The break between Isaiah 8 and 9 dislocates the whole sense of the passage.

Isaiah 53 should begin at 52:13, to agree with its structure:

A Isaiah 52:13-15	The foretold exaltation of Yahweh's servant, the Messiah
B Isaiah 53:1-6	His rejection by others
B Isaiah 53:7-10	His own sufferings
A Isaiah 53:10-12	The foretold exaltation of Messiah

Isaiah 52:1-12 should have been the concluding portion of chapter 51.

Matthew 9:35-39 should belong to chapter 10.

John 3 should commence with chapter 2:33, thus connecting the remarks about "men" with the "man of the Pharisees."

John 8:1 should be the last verse of chapter 7, setting in contrast the destination of the people and that of the Lord.

In Acts 4 the last two verses should have been the first two verses of chapter five.

These examples will suffice to emphasize that the chapter breaks are human and unhelpful.

### Chapter and running page headings

These become interpretations instead of translation and are positively mischievous. We should absolutely disregard them.

In an ordinary Bible, over Isaiah 29 we read, "God's judgements upon Jerusalem." Over Isaiah 30, we read, "God's mercies to His Church." But there is no break or change in the subject matter; it is all "the vision which Isaiah saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (Isaiah 1:1). Yet God's 'mercies' are claimed for the church with His 'judgements' generously given over to the Jews. It may be 'dividing' the Word, but it is not "rightly dividing" and cannot be "without partiality".

### Punctuation

The most ancient manuscripts have no system of punctuation. Indeed there is not even any break between the words. It is important to know this, as the translator could *interpret* the Word, wrongly dividing the Word.

No two later editors have punctuated the text in the same way. It has been purely arbitrary and without authority. The Authorized Version of 1611 was punctuated by the translators according to their best judgement. Even here, many changes were made in subsequent editions. There were editions in 1616, 1636, 1639 (a complete revision done without any authority), 1669, 1701, 1762, 1769 (which made further changes).

The advertisement to the Universities' Edition called the *Parallel Bible* (of the Revised Version and the Authorized Version) endorses this:

"The left hand column contains the text of the Authorized Version *as usually printed*, with the marginal notes and references of the Edition of 1611, the spelling of these being conformed to modern usage. In the left hand margin are also placed, in square brackets, *the more important differences* between the edition of 1611 and the text *now in use*, whether these differences are due to *corrections* of the edition or to *errors* which have subsequently crept in."

Despite these facts, some assume that the punctuation in the present edition of the Authorized Version is 'gospel truth' and may treat as heretics those who dare to question the authority of this human interference with the Word of Truth.

Two examples of wrong punctuation will highlight the dangers:

#### **Luke 16:9:**

*Authorized Version*

And I say unto you, "Make to yourselves by friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

*Concordant Literal Version*

And am I saying to you, "Make for yourselves friends with the mammon of injustice, that, whenever they may be defaulting, they should be receiving you into the eonian tabernacles?"

The context clearly shows that Christ is *contrasting*, and not identifying, human and divine modes of judgement. This context (verses 10-12) and the logical conclusion of the parable, have no meaning whatever unless the commendation of the unjust steward's lord is set in contrast with the condemnation of Christ. These verses (10-12) are no mere independent irrelevant statement, but are the logical conclusion to the whole argument.

#### **Luke 23:43:**

*Authorized Version:*

"Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

*Concordant Literal Version:*

And Jesus said to him, "Verily, to you am I saying today, with Me shall you be in paradise."

Is the common punctuation correct? We are completely dependent on the context and on the analogy of truth. "Verily" and "I am saying to you today" emphasize the occasion of making a solemn statement. 'Paradise' was the condition of the earth before the entrance of Satan and the curse. It will be the condition of the earth when Satan is bound, and the Lord reigns in His kingdom. It is Eden and the Garden. It is never used in any other sense than of a place of beauty and delight *on the earth*. The Lord answered the request of the dying believer, not by promising something for which he did not ask, but by granting his desire and request.

#### **Parentheses**

The Edition of 1611 abounded in parentheses. Later editions largely discarded them or replaced them by commas. But parentheses are useful in making the meaning clear. The true parenthesis is an additional explanation and is complete in itself.

Other types of parentheses are:

Parebole	(or insertion, when it is not an explanation, but an independent additional statement);
Interjection	(feeling);
Ejaculation	(wish or prayer);
Hypotimesis	(apology or excuse or underestimating);
Anderesis	(detraction);
Catapoce	(sudden exclamation);

All the above are complete in themselves; but the

Epitrechon (or 'running along', thrown in casually)

is NOT complete in itself.

Structures of scripture often reveal parenthesis. For example, Gen 15:13:

- A know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs
- B and shall serve them
- B and they shall afflict them
- A four hundred years

This shows that the sojourn as a stranger is for 400 years, not the servitude and affliction which is a parenthesis (epitrechon).

Another example of epitrechon is in Genesis 46:26: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt (which came out of his loins) besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were three score and six." So 66 people were direct descendants, whereas the 75 in Acts 7:14 included "all his kindred." These examples show the importance of rightly dividing the Word of truth as to its literary form.



## **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD: SUBJECT MATTER**

Many believe that every part of the Bible pertains directly to the Church or to every person, at all times. While the Word of God is written *for* all persons, and *for* all time, not every part is addressed *to* all persons or *about* all persons *in* all time.

Every word is written *for* our learning, but it is written *about* three distinct classes of people, (1 Cor 10:32):  
“*The Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of God.*”

If we interpret everything as referring to the Church of God we will produce no greater impediment to a right understanding of the Word. What is written to and about the Jew, belongs to and must be interpreted of the Jew. What is written to and about the Church of God, belongs to and must be interpreted of the Church of God.

For example, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, is written to the Church of God, not the gentiles (or the unconverted world). To apply the letter to pagans is to rob the Church of God of its most precious heritage. We can see therefore that unless we rightly divide the subject matter of the Word of truth, we shall not get the truth, but shall get error instead.

All three groups may learn much from what is written of only the one. The inspired God-breathed Word is “beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness” for *all* who shall read it (2 Tim 3:16). That which happened to Israel, happened unto *them* for ensamples, “and they are written for *our* admonition” (1 Cor 10:11). “Whatever was written before was written for this teaching of *ours*” (Romans 15:4).

Unless we apply those scriptures which apply to us, however, we shall find ourselves using one truth to upset another truth; we shall be setting what is true of one class in opposition to what is true of another class.

We must emphasize the need to rightly divide the subject matter of the Bible. Whenever we study any portion of the Word of God, we must ask the question:

### **CONCERNING WHOM IS THIS WRITTEN?**

We must be careful to restrict the interpretation of the passage to one of the three classes. If we do not, we shall get darkness instead of light, confusion instead of instruction, trouble instead of peace, and error instead of truth.

An example of this is in the book of Romans. Romans 8:38-39 shows that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Yet Romans 11:21 reads, “For if God spares not the natural boughs, neither will He be sparing you.” First the reader would rejoice that there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” and then be warned of the possibility of being cut off from the olive tree.

The difficulty will be resolved only by rightly dividing this chapter according to the subject matter. Only then will beauty, light and instruction come out of the darkness and confusion.

What is the subject matter? Chapter 8 is about the Church of God; chapter 9 is about the Jews (the apostle’s “relatives according to the flesh”, verse 3), as are chapters 10 and 11. In chapter 11 verse 11, the gentiles are introduced. Indeed in verse 13, the apostle distinctly says, “I am saying to the nations.” Therefore the warnings and threats of 11:21-22 are “for our learning” but are not addressed to us as members of the Church of God.

Israel is compared with three trees in the Hebrew scriptures:

The fig tree as a symbol of Israel’s national privileges,  
the olive tree as a symbol of Israel’s religious privileges,  
and the vine tree as a symbol of Israel’s spiritual privileges.

The natural branches are broken off for a season, and the branches of the wild olive (as the gentiles are called) are grafted in, also for a season. Israel have lost their religious privileges which have passed over to the gentiles. Israel once had their own land, their own metropolitan city, their own government, [note when this was written] their own religious privileges. These are summarized in 9:4-5.

Chapter 3:1-2 asks, “What advantage then has the Jew?” and answers, “Much in every manner, but first, indeed, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

Oh, what confusion is brought into the Word, and what trouble is brought into our minds by not rightly dividing the subject matter of this scripture! Oh, the struggles that have to be made to bring Romans 11 into harmony with Romans 8! It cannot be done; the effort is so painfully obvious.

### **THE ADDRESS ON LETTERS**

In the matter of letters, or epistles, it is very important in our social life to carefully observe the *address* written on the envelope. It makes for peace and harmony, and prevents awkward mistakes and misunderstandings. It is a mistake that is sometimes made, and may be that when we have opened a letter that is not addressed to us we commence to read it. And as we read on we find things that are exceedingly interesting and most instructive. But we come upon other things that we cannot make out, and we find reference to matters which we do not understand, and to circumstances with which we are unacquainted, because we are not the person directly written to.

#### **The Epistle of James**

This is addressed to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad. By ignoring the address much confusion has been caused. These Jews believed that Christ was the Messiah, but were they members of “The Church of God”? The stand-point of the epistle is wholly Jewish:

They were monotheists (2:19); their place of worship was the synagogue (2:2 margin); the prohibition of swearing is according to the Jewish formula (5:12); the anointing with oil accords with Jewish practice at that time. Spiritual and vital Christianity is nowhere seen. But what we do see are:

All the errors combated refer to Judaism, e.g. fatalism, formalism, hypocrisy, arrogance and oppression. The works of mercy and charity are shown to be better than all the outward forms of religious worship.

References to the early and latter rains (5:7), to the fig, oil and wine (3:12), to drought (5:17-18), to salt and bitter springs (3:11-12) and to the hot wind (1:11) are all phenomena of Palestine or the East.

There are many references to the 'Sermon on the Mount' which relate to the past dispensation, not to the present:

<b>James</b>	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>Matthew</b>
1:2 & 5:10-11	5:10-12	1:4	5:48
1:5,17 & 5:15	7:7,11	1:9 & 2:5	5:3
1:22-25 & 2:10-11	5:19	1:20	5:22
1:22 & 2:14 & 5:7-9	7:21-26	2:1-3	6:2,5
2:8	7:12	2:10-11	7:12
2:13	6:14-15 & 7:2	2:14	7:21
3:1 & 4:11	7:1	3:12	7:16
3:17-18	5:9	4:3	7:8
4:4	6:24	4:8	5:8
4:9	5:4	4:10	5:3-4
4:11	7:1	4:13-16	6:25
5:2	6:19	5:10	5:12
5:12	5:34		

We can compare James with the Lord's teaching of the Kingdom elsewhere:

James 1:14 with Matthew 15:19; James 4:12 with Matthew 10:28 and James 5:1 with Luke 6:24.

Such was the confusion caused by appropriating the epistle by those who are 'in Christ' and 'complete in Him' that there were always doubts about its canonicity. It is well known that Luther called it a "veritable epistle of straw".

Do we belong to the Twelve Tribes? Do we worship in a synagogue? The answers to these questions show that the epistle is not addressed to us, i.e. 'the Church of God'. When we rightly divide the epistle, we do not need to try to harmonize James with Romans; to reconcile its teachings with that of Ephesians or Colossians. James will be seen to be true in what he wrote to those whom he addressed and Paul will be seen to be true in what he wrote.

### **The Epistle to the Hebrews**

This letter is also written to Hebrew believers. James and Peter wrote to the same class, the *Diaspora* or Dispersion of Israel.

If we take the epistle as addressed directly to ourselves, we will be greatly perplexed and perturbed when we read passages like 6:6: "falling aside" or 10:26: "it is no longer leaving a sacrifice concerned with sins" for those who "sin voluntarily". This is in direct contradiction to what is written specifically to them in Romans 8 and elsewhere.

In 2 Tim 2:15, God's children are compared to workmen, whose chief work lies in connection with His Word of truth. He who gave that Word has directed them how to work, so as to excel as His workmen; and that they may not be ashamed of their work at His coming. He has sent them an inspired instruction so that they find the 'truth' they seek; and at the same time have the blessed assurance of showing themselves and their work, alike, "approved unto God".

## **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD: THE SEVEN DISPENSATIONS**

The word translated 'dispensation' is *oikonomia* in the Greek. It means 'the act of administering', and by the figure of metonymy, 'the *time* of that administering'. *Oikos* 'house', *nemo* 'to dispense, weigh or deal out', as a steward or housekeeper. Hence the word was used of the management or administration of a household. The word 'dispensation' comes from the Latin, '*dis*' (apart) and '*pendere*' (to weigh), therefore a weighing out. It is used in this sense to dispense medicine, i.e. weighed or measured out.

The Greek word *oikonomia* is transliterated in our English word 'economy'. The sense of the word in AD 1611 was 'administration', but since then the word has come to mean 'saving' rather than 'spending'. Today's usage is 'frugality' or 'thrift'. But the meaning of the Greek in the New Testament is not affected by these modern changes. It is always 'administration'. The AV has 'dispensation' (four times), 'edifying' (once), 'fellowship' (once) and 'stewardship' (three times) for the same word *oikonomia*.

It is clear that God adapts his administration to the different 'times and seasons'. For example, He administers differently with Adam before and after he sinned. His administration with Israel 'under the Law' is different with us today under grace.

The present administration of God is in grace, called "the administration of the mystery" (or 'secret' as the word means in the Greek) "which in other generations is not made known to the sons of humanity" (Eph 3:5). It was "concealed from the eons in God" (Eph 3:9). Again it was "a secret hushed in times eonian" (Romans 16:25).

Paul was made the special administrator of all the truth connected with it (Col 1:25). This truth was granted to Paul, “for you to *complete* The Word of God.” In “other ages” certain truths were hidden which are “now revealed”. In the same way, the Lord Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

Everything which God has spoken belongs to its own proper time and dispensation. If we read into one time or dispensation that which belongs to another, we shall have only confusion. Confusion so great it will be absolutely impossible for us to have any idea of the purpose or meaning of what “God hath spoken”.

There are at least seven distinct administrations. Each has a beginning and an end. They are:

<b>Theocratic</b>	Innocence before Adam sinned (Gen 1 and 2)
<b>Patriarchal</b>	After the ‘Fall’ and before the Law given (Gen 4 to Exod 20)
<b>Legal</b>	Israel only under the Law
<b>Grace</b>	Today, for Jew and Gentile (i.e. or individuals without the distinction previously made)
<b>Judicial</b>	Prior to the prophesized restoration of all things
<b>Millennial</b>	
<b>Glory</b>	The eternal state

Their relationship can be clearly seen in the skeleton:

A	The Edenic State	(Innocence)
B	Mankind as a whole	(Patriarchal)
C	Israel	(Under Law)
D	The Church of God in grace	(The Secret)
C	Israel	(Judicial)
B	Mankind as a whole	(Millennial)
A	The Eternal State	(Glory)

This shows that:

- the first corresponds with the seventh,
- the second corresponds with the sixth,
- the third correspond with the fifth, but
- the fourth does *not* correspond with any of the others and stands out alone.

The first and seventh are divine in origin and principles. God is in direct communion with man; in the first, before the entrance of sin and in the seventh, after the ending of sin. The second and sixth relate to mankind as a whole. The third and fifth are occupied with Israel; in the former being governed under Law, in the latter judged ‘by the Law’. The fourth, the Church of God stands alone in the central position.

Now let us look in more detail at each dispensation.

### THE FIRST DISPENSATION

In this dispensation, Adam was directly under the Divine administration and tuition of God Himself. God was his Teacher, revealing Himself and His wonderful works to Adam. He visited Adam at certain definite times. He brought animals to Adam to instruct him (Gen 2:19-20) and He gave him a companion (Gen 2:21-22).

Such direct communion of man with God has, since that moment, been in abeyance, and will continue to be so until the curse is removed in the eternal state of Glory. In this first administration, Adam was dealt with as innocent and man can never be dealt with in the same way during all the succeeding dispensations until the curse and all its effects are done away with. Man was then what is called ‘under probation’. This marks off that administration sharply and absolutely, *for no one is now under probation*. Man failed under trial. The one test was the Word of God. God had spoken, and the question was, “Will man believe God or Satan?” Many today believe Satan’s lies, namely that:

man has within himself the divine (“Ye shall be as God.”) *and*  
 there is no death (“Ye shall not surely die.”)

Having failed the test, man can never again be thus tested. Despite popular theology, man is not under probation. Man is declared to be utterly ruined, and “at enmity with God”, he is not “subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” and has “no good thing in him”. Man needs no further probation to verify this solemn fact. All that was said and done by God in that first administration applies only to that Edenic state and to no other.

God was man’s teacher. God was His own revealer. He gave man his trial and his test, and after these had done their work, God pronounced His sentence on men, and His doom on the old serpent.

### THE SECOND DISPENSATION

During this, the Patriarchal administration, mankind was treated as a whole. They had completely failed under probation. Having lost the Divine teaching, this dispensation is characterized as the “times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30). This verse contrasts then and now. “Indeed, then, condoning the times of ignorance, God is *now* charging mankind that all everywhere are to repent...”

In those times, God ‘overlooked’ that which He could **not** overlook after He had given the law. What were ‘sins’ before the law became ‘transgressions’. The principles applicable in “those times of ignorance” were not appropriate when He revealed his law by Moses and made known His will to the sons of men.

That we need to rightly divide these dispensations is clear from Romans 2:12: “For whoever sinned without law, *without* law also shall perish, and whoever sinned **in** law, through law will be judged.”

The same principles must prevail when the final judgement of those who have lived in both dispensations shall come. The same principle will surely apply in the future judgement to those living today.

Because there are those who sin without having heard the gospel and there are those who do not obey it yet have heard it (2 Thess 1:8).

Rightly understood, we have the key to a problem which has perplexed many saints. There were people who were “without law” and those “under law”, those that are without the gospel and those who are under the gospel.

God dealt with mankind on this principle of judgement in all later dispensations: for all were under His administration as to government. The patriarchal dispensation was governed by patriarchal law, as the following one was governed by Mosaic law. Both laws were given by God.

It is often supposed that before the Mosaic law, mankind was left to themselves. But such was not the case. Mankind, in general, was ‘under law’, but it was unwritten law. Israel, on the other hand, was under written law, “written by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

When Adam and Eve passed from the state of innocence, a new administration began. God’s first act was to point the way back to Himself and peace. The way back was by sacrifice, substitution and by blood.

God must have given, and made known, instructions which those who believed obeyed. “By faith Abel offers to God more of a sacrifice than Cain...” (Heb 11:4). But, “Faith is out of tidings, yet the tidings through a declaration of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Abel, therefore, with the rest of mankind, must have heard and known God’s command. Abel obeyed it. It was “by faith” otherwise it would have been by fancy.

God testified of Abel’s offering by consuming it with “fire from heaven”. This is the only way God ‘accepted’ sacrifice (Psalm 20:3 margin, and compare Lev 9:24, Judges 6:21, 1 Kings 18:38, 1 Chron 21:26, and 2 Chron 7:1). By this did Abel know that his sacrifice was accepted and that he was righteous. Cain also understood that God “had not respect” for his offering. The fire fell upon Abel’s lamb, not upon Abel; upon the substitute not the sinner. Cain’s offering was the “fruit of the ground” (Gen 4:2-3), the fruit of what God had declared “cursed be the ground” (Gen 3:17). Because fire did not fall on Cain’s sacrifice, the way back to God was made clear, and man’s disobedience was revealed.

Since then there has been God’s way and there has been man’s way back to God. There have always been only two ways. One was by faith, the other by works. One was Christ, the other Religion. One was by God’s grace, the other was by human merit.

The way back to God by sacrifice, substitution, and blood during this administration requires system. The system was fourfold:

A place of worship, set apart for access to the Lord, was needed.

Certain persons were needed to officiate.

Certain garments were to be worn by these officials.

Certain forms and ceremonies were to be done by these officials.

### **A place of worship**

Genesis 3:24: “And He is driving out the human, and is causing him to tabernacle at the east of the garden of Eden. And He set the cherubim and a flaming sword turning itself to keep the way of the tree of the living.”

This is where Abel and Cain brought their offerings to Yahweh (Gen 4:3-4, compare Lev 1:3) and where Cain “is faring from before Yahweh Elohim” (verse 16). It is at the opening of this place that “a sin offering is reclining” (Gen 4:7). Rebecca went there to inquire of Yahweh (Gen 25:22). Abraham also “is rising where he had stood before the face of Yahweh” (Gen 19:27).

### **Officials**

In this administration, there were preachers, priests and prophets.

Gen 9:26: “And saying is [Noah], ‘Blest be Yahweh, the Elohim of Shem.’” It is probable that Shem had charge of this tabernacle. Noah built an altar and sacrificed clean animals of ascent offerings on it (Gen 8:20). Abraham built an altar to Yahweh Who appeared to him (Gen 12:8). At Bethel, Jacob built an altar, for there the Elohim was revealed to him (Gen 35:7). We can see therefore that heads of families acted as priests.

Gen 14:18 states that Melchizedek was a priest of the El Supreme. Abraham tithed at the time of Melchizedek (Heb 7:9). The first-born had certain privileges, including the duty of offering sacrifices. Exodus 24:5: “Then [Moses] sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord.” This was before the consecration of Aaron and his sons under the law, so these “young men” can only be firstborn.

Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), Enoch was a prophet (Jude 14) and Abraham is called a prophet by God (Gen 20:7).

### **Official garments**

Rebecca stored “coveted garments of Esau, her eldest son” (Gen 27:15). These could well have been priestly garments. If this is so, it explains why Esau was “defiled” when he gave up his birth-right (Heb 12:16). Reuben forfeited his birth-right (1 Chron 5:1-2). The birth-right had three parts:

the *priestly office* obtained by Levi,

the *rule* by Judah,

the *double portion* by Joseph, through Ephraim and Manasseh.

Joseph’s so-called “coat of many colours”, in the CLV is a “distinctive tunic” (Gen 37:3). The Hebrew is *k’thoneth*, a word associated with the coats of priests (Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:70,72) or with those of royalty (2 Sam 13:18-19).

## Official forms and ceremonies

The following were all done prior to the proclamation of the law on Mount Sinai:

Anointing or consecrating with oil	(Gen 28:18; 31:13)
Building of altars	(Gen 8:20; 12:7; 35:1,3)
Pouring out drink offerings	(Gen 35:14)
Making a covenant by sacrifice	(Gen 15:9-18)
Keeping the Sabbath	(Exod 16:23, compare Exod 15:25 and Deut 5:12)
Offering of "seven ewe lambs"	(Gen 21:31)
Distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean'	(Gen 7:2; 8:20)
Prohibition of blood as food	(Gen 9:4)
Execution of murderers	(Gen 9:6; 42:22)
Prohibition of adultery	(Gen 12:18; 26:10; 39:9; 49:4)
Binding nature of oaths	(Gen 26:28)
Obligation of vows	(Gen 28:20-22; 31:13)
Sin of fornication	(Gen 34:7)
Prohibition of marriage with the uncircumcised	(Gen 34:14, cp Exod 34:16)
Honouring of parents	(Gen 9:25-26)
Purification or ceremonial cleansing for worship	(Gen 35:2)
Birth-right of the firstborn	(Gen 25:31, cp Exod 22:19 & Deut 21:17)
Marrying of the brother's widow	(Gen 38:8)

These reveal the existence of an orderly administration. They must have been divinely promulgated and exactly suited for the patriarchal dispensation. It is important to separate these laws from other dispensations. To mix them is to introduce confusion where all is otherwise in perfect order.

## THE THIRD DISPENSATION

A totally different principle is involved in this dispensation. God's dealings with Israel 'under law' were perfectly appropriate for the third administration. Everything changed by the giving of the law. The previous dispensation was 'without law', the present one is 'under grace'. If we interpret for ourselves today what relates to Israel 'under law', we place ourselves under a covenant of works, and practically deny our standing in grace.

Then, it was true to say, "And when the wicked turns from his wickedness which he does, and is executing judgement and justice, he shall be keeping alive his soul" (Ezek 18:27). But to interpret that of ourselves, now, is contrary to fact; and to do so is to flatly deny our true Church standing which declares that we are not saved by works but by grace (Titus 3:5; Rom 11:6). James 2 may seem to contradict this, but the epistle is addressed to the twelve tribes (James 1:1). As commented earlier, much confusion has been caused by ignoring the address.

The ceremonial law was given to Israel, *not* to Assyria, Egypt or any other nation. Anyone would be wise to apply precepts of universal application. God gave the food laws in His infinite wisdom, and these were not meaningless or arbitrary. Although we may be guided for our health's sake, we are in no sense 'under law'.

The third dispensation is closed up by the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. (The Acts are transitional.) The ceremonial law could not continue when the temple was destroyed. In effect, it had already ceased with the death and sacrifice of Christ, which fulfilled the law (Col 2:14 etc.).

God's revelation tells us that, "Christ has become the servant of the *circumcision*, for the sake of the truth of God, to confirm the patriarchal promises. Yet the nations are to glorify God for His mercy" (Rom 15:8-9).

Christ did not come to found a church. These verses refer to the Jew and gentile. The Jews rejected the kingdom and crucified their King. The gentiles in general have not yet glorified God for His mercy.

Peter, to whom "the keys of the kingdom" (not the Church, but the *kingdom*) were given, later proclaimed the King and kingdom. The promise of Christ's return on their national repentance was repeated (Acts 3:19-21). But the command to repent was unheeded by the nation and its rulers. Eventually, Paul pronounced God's formal rejection of the nation in Acts 28:24-28.

## THE FOURTH DISPENSATION

In the fourth dispensation, neither Jews nor gentiles are dealt with as groups, but as individuals. Both 'transgressors' of the Jews and 'sinners of the gentiles' are called out, and made a new body, a third group called the 'Church of God'. "Now there is no Jew nor yet Greek.... for you all are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28; Rom 16:25-26)

If God had revealed it earlier, the Jew, today, could reply that he was obliged to fulfil prophecy. It was "concealed from the eons in God" (Eph 3:9). God kept the secret to himself. Nothing was unknown or unforeseen.

The members of the Church of God were "chosen in Him *before* the disruption (AV 'foundation') of the world". Why was it kept secret? All we can say is that "the secret things belong unto God". Only those things that are revealed concern us. One of these secrets, the 'great' one (1 Tim 3:16; Eph 5:32) has been revealed and we rejoice in its revelation.

This dispensation began outwardly by the ministry of Paul. It is set forth in its fullness in the epistles he wrote from his prison in Rome: Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. This dispensation will end by the members of Christ's body, the Church of the living God, being "taken up in glory" (1 Tim 3:16). "Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17). "For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are

awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ..." (Phil 3:20). This event, called in 2 Thess 2:1 "our assembling to Him" will close this fourth dispensation.

The object of this dispensation is **not** to convert the world, or to improve society. The one object is the formation of the one spiritual Body of Christ by calling out those who were chosen in Him "before the disruption of the world".

To that sole end is this good news made known today in all the world. No other dispensation had or will have such a gospel of free grace. Before and after this dispensation all is connected with man and what he is and what he is to do, but in this dispensation it is a question of what *Christ* is, and of what He has done.

### **THE FIFTH DISPENSATION**

The dispensation of grace will be followed by the dispensation of judgement. Israel once again becomes the central object, this time under judgement, not again under law.

Today is called "Man's Day" (1 Cor 4:3), because it is now that man is judging. The fifth dispensation is called "the Lord's day" (Rev 1:10) because it is then that He will judge.

Man's day of judging will end and the Lord's day of judging will begin. Isaiah 2:11,12,17 describe that day: "The eyes of the haughty human are low, and prostrate is the highness of mortals, and Yahweh alone is impregnable in that day."

The object of all of God's dealings with men and His judgements are:

*The abasement of Man and the exaltation of Yahweh.*

The whole of the fifth dispensation is called "the Day of the Lord". It has to do with the 'Church of God'. This is clear from 1 Thess 5:1-5: "Now concerning the times and the eras, brethren, you have no need to be written to, for you yourselves are accurately aware that the day of the Lord is as a thief in the night thus is it coming!" "...for you are all sons of the light and sons of the day."

That day cannot overtake the Church of God "as a thief" because the Church has nothing to do with "times and seasons". That day has to do with those whom it will "overtake".

All that is said about that coming dispensation is appropriate to, and in harmony with, the great principle which characterizes that administration. It will then be right for Israel to rejoice over the judgements inflicted on all their enemies. The 'imprecatory psalms' (expressing a curse) will be appropriate. The language used in the dispensation of judgement could never have been used in any former dispensation.

Israel will not again be under law, but will be under a 'new covenant'. The stony or hard heart will be taken away and a new heart implanted within them, and a new spirit imparted to them (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-38). Israel will then become the only faultless nation the world has ever seen.

This and the next dispensation belongs to "the times of restoration of all which God speaks through the mouth of His holy prophets who are from the eon" (Acts 3:21).

### **THE SIXTH DISPENSATION**

Once again, mankind as a whole will be dealt with. This millennial or theocratic dispensation will begin with the binding of Satan (Rev 20:1-2) and will end with the great white throne and the lake of fire (Rev 20:15). It will last a thousand years.

God will deal with men during these millennial days with righteousness, power and glory. His will will then be done on earth as it is in heaven. The binding of Satan will characterize the dispensation. Language appropriate then, will not be appropriate during all other periods when Satan is not bound. This dispensation stands alone, unique.

### **THE SEVENTH DISPENSATION**

Very little is said about this, the last dispensation. The eternal state begins at Rev 21:1 with "a new heaven and a new earth". Nothing is said about its end.

All that we know about it is contained in the last two chapters of Revelation. Beyond this, therefore, we cannot go.

These, then, are the seven dispensations. Each has its own defined beginning and ending and special characteristics. We need to rightly divide them and to correctly apply the Word of truth to them.

A summary will help us understand the differences:

<b>MAN'S CONDITION</b>	<b>ENDS WITH</b>
1 Innocence	Expulsion from Eden
2 Without law	The Flood and the Judgement on Babel
3 Under law	Rejection of Israel
4 Under Grace	'Rapture' of the Church and the Day of the Lord
5 Under Judgement	Destruction of Anti-Christ
6 Millennial	Satan cast into lake of fire, the Judgement of the Great White Throne
7 Glory	"NO END"

### **OTHER TIMES AND SEASONS**

#### **The Times of the Gentiles**

The "times of the Gentiles" or "nations" overlap more than one dispensation. They begin with Jerusalem falling under the power of Babylon, they continue while "Jerusalem is trodden by the nations" and remain "until the eras of the nations may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

These times of the Gentiles are referred to in Romans 11:25 "... callousness, in part, on Israel has come, until the complement of the nations may be entering." This cannot refer to the Church. "And thus *all Israel* shall be saved" (v 26).

Today, the Church is made up of both Jews and gentiles. They form part of a body which is neither Jew nor gentile. "For whoever are baptized into Christ, put on Christ, in whom there is no Jew nor yet Greek...for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). "... wherein there is no Greek and Jew ...but all and in all is Christ" (Col 3:11). (See also Romans 10:12; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 5:6; Eph 2:15).

This must refer to the filling up of the times of the gentiles, and the word 'gentiles' must be a figure for the 'times' which they fill up. Moreover, Israel will not be saved by the 'rapture' of the Church as revealed in 1 Thess 4:16-17, but "there comes to Zion the Redeemer, and He shall turn back transgression from Jacob" (Isa 59:20). This verse is quoted by Paul in Romans 11:26 showing the means by which "all Israel shall be saved".

The Deliverer must deliver Israel from something and that something is the 'great tribulation' when "the fire shall come as a stream" (Isa 59:19).

Clearly then, Romans 11:25 refers to the same 'times of the gentiles' or 'eras of the nations' as Luke 21:24.

### **The Present Parenthesis**

Our Lord, in the synagogue at Nazareth, stood up and read Isaiah 61:1-2: "The spirit of My Lord Yahweh is on Me, because Yahweh anoints Me to bear tidings to the humble, He sends Me to bind up the broken hearted, to herald to captives, liberty, and, to the blind, the unclosing of the eyes, and, to the bound, to take the jubilee. To herald an acceptable year for Yahweh."

At this point, he furled the scroll and gave it back to the deputy and sat down (Luke 4:20). Why did he close the scroll in the middle of the second verse?

Because the next sentence belongs to a yet future dispensation. "The acceptable year for Yahweh" had come. But "the day of vengeance for our Elohim" had not, and has not even yet, come. The Lord divided these two dispensations off by "closing the book" and that is what we must do if we are to avoid confusion. There is no mark in the Hebrew text to indicate such a break, yet the break is surely there.

Of "an acceptable year of the Lord", Christ said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). But He could not have said this if He had read the next sentence, "and a day of vengeance for our Elohim." Yet the whole of this present Church dispensation, this interval of the dispensation of grace, comes between these two sentences. Only a comma divides them in our English translation.

This is because the secret of the Church was "hid in God" and had not been revealed to the sons of men. It could not be mentioned, so it had to be passed over. Hence the Lord 'closed the book' and 'sat down'.

The prophets "who prophesy concerning the grace which is for you, searching into what manner of era the spirit of Christ in them made evident, when testifying beforehand to the sufferings pertaining to Christ and the glories after these" (1 Peter 1:10-11), did not know the length of time that would elapse between Christ's sufferings and His glory. It could be long or short. Hence their inquiry and their search. Bible students today would do well to see there is a gap of time, so clearly shown by our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth when He closed the book. We should 'open the book' like Ezra, and search diligently as to the "manner of era the spirit of Christ made evident" so that we may find out why the Lord 'closed the book' of Isaiah.

This gap is passed over in the gospels in silence, as if it were non-existent, because it had not yet been revealed. The book is closed until it is opened in the Book of Revelation, where the kingdom is set up with divine power and glory.

The seven parables of the kingdom in Matt 13 leap over this present dispensation. They carry over the truths concerning the kingdom, and continue them as though the kingdom had never been in abeyance. To understand these parables we must entirely exclude the Church of God and the period of its dispensation. Then we will see which part of each parable belongs to the past and which belongs to the next.

Here are some examples of where we, like our Lord, must "close the book". Otherwise we cannot possibly understand the scriptures we read. The mark (-) indicates a parenthesis.

#### **Psalm 118:22**

The stone which the builders rejected (-)  
it came to be for the head of the corner.

#### **Isaiah 9:6:**

For a Boy is born to us, a Son is given to us (-)

And the chieftainship shall come to be on His shoulder, and His name is called 'Marvellous'. Counsel to the master shall He bring. To the chief of the future, welfare.

#### **Isaiah 53:10:**

Yet Yahweh desires to crush Him, and He causes Him to be wounded. Should you place His soul for a guilt approach (-)  
He shall see a seed. He shall lengthen His days, and the desire of Yahweh shall prosper in His hand.

#### **Zechariah 9:9-10:**

Exult exceedingly, daughter of Zion! Shout daughter of Jerusalem! Behold! your king shall come to you! Righteous and endowed with salvation is He, humble and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a she-ass (-)

And He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the bow of battle shall be cut off; and He will speak peace to the nations, and His rule is from sea unto sea. And from the stream unto the limits of the land.

#### **Luke 1:31-32:**

And lo! You shall be conceiving and be pregnant and be bringing forth a son, and you shall be calling His name Jesus (-) He shall be great and Son of the Most High shall he be called. And the Lord God shall be giving Him the throne of David.

These examples show us the importance of following our Lord's example in closing the book. This principle will only apply where more than one dispensation is referred to. God's dealings in each period correspond with its distinct character. To understand these dealings, we must correctly classify the truth appropriate to each period.

This classification is a subject separate from the dispensations themselves. We shall next study dispensational truth and teaching.

### **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD: DISPENSATIONAL TRUTH AND TEACHING**

Once we thoroughly understand the dispensations, it is easy for us to keep the truth pertaining to each quite distinct.

If we take a truth belonging to one dispensation and interpret it of another, we will be confused and will not enjoy the study of the Word. Therefore we must learn to appropriate each truth to the dispensation to which it belongs. Otherwise we shall not grow in knowledge. We are to increase in knowledge as well as in grace (2 Peter 3:18). To do this we must empty ourselves of all tradition. We must question what we have received from man's traditions and be prepared to *unlearn* what we have been taught if it is contrary to this one great requirement of the Word of truth.

Even if what we learn from man agrees with what we learn from the Lord, we must be prepared to learn it again, direct from the Word. The truth must hold us, not our holding the truth.

We will examine six areas of rightly dividing the Word as to its dispensational truth and teaching.

#### **ONE PART OF A PAST DISPENSATION AND ANOTHER PART OF THE PAST**

The whole of the four gospels belongs to the old dispensation when the kingdom was proclaimed and afterward rejected. However, truth pertaining to the proclamation period is not truth for the rejection period, even though both are part of the same dispensation.

For example, in Matt 10:5-6 we find the command, "Into a road of the nations you may not pass forth, and into a city of the Samaritans you may not be entering. Yet be going rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

If the Word is not divided, then this command is still binding on all the Lord's servants. If it belongs to all persons, for all time, and for all times, then it is of universal interpretation. According to this, there ought to be no missionary societies for work among the gentiles, only for the Jews. But the principle does not govern modern missionary operations. Therefore something must be wrong somewhere. Either this command remains in force and missions today ignore it, or there must be some explanation which excuses such disobedience.

If in defence, later commands are quoted, such as Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world, herald the evangel to the entire creation," we are left with only two possible explanations: Either the Word of God flatly contradicts itself as to the fundamental principle of missionary work, **or** there must be some division between the two commands.

Clearly we must give each command its own due and proper place, significance and importance. One command is not more exalted than another; we must assign each to its own appropriate sphere.

The first command not to go to the Gentiles was given in connection with the proclamation of the king and the kingdom. Later when both had been rejected, this command was no longer appropriate. The command could then be given to go into all the world. Both were equally true. But both commands were given in the past dispensation.

Christ had previously commanded his disciples, "Nothing pick up for the road, neither staff, nor beggar's bag, nor bread, nor silver, nor have two tunics apiece" (Luke 9:3). But when the kingdom has been rejected, Christ on the eve of His crucifixion abrogated these commands. He asked them, "When I dispatch you minus purse and beggar's bag and sandals, you did not want anything?" And they said, "Nothing" (Luke 22:35).

Then Christ said, "*BUT NOW*, he who has a purse let him pick it up, likewise a beggar's bag also, and he who has none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword."

Those two words "but now" announce the fact that even in the same dispensation, with only a brief interval of time between them, those two commands are to be rightly divided.

In spite of these two examples from Matt 10 and Luke 9, many readers, if they do not give up in dismay, lose peace, joy and strength because for them the Bible is jumbled together.

#### **A PAST DISPENSATION APPLIED TO THE PRESENT**

We should not put ourselves under the law to which we died in Christ. Christ has made us free from the law which has no power over a man who has died.

#### **Law and Grace**

To those who lived under the law, it could rightly be said, "So it shall come to be righteousness for us when we observe to do all this instruction before Yahweh our Elohim, just as He has enjoined on us." But to those who live in this present dispensation of grace, it is declared, "By works of law, no flesh at all shall be justified in His sight, for through law is the recognition of sin" (Romans 3:20). That is the very opposite of Deut 6:25!



Which is true and which is false? The answer to that is that neither is false. Both are true if we rightly divide the Word as to its dispensational truth and teaching.

Deut 6:25 was true then concerning Israel and is in harmony with the covenant of works under which Israel had placed itself. Romans 3:20 is true now concerning Jew, Gentile and Church of God. The first was true of those under the law. The second is true of those who are under grace.

In the old dispensation God dealt with one nation only. In the present dispensation God deals with individuals out of all nations. This is the key to the understanding of those many passages where the words 'all', 'every', and 'world' are used in the Greek scriptures. 'All' must mean one of two things. Either 'all' *without exception* or 'all' *without distinction*. It is in this latter sense that it is constantly used in contrast with the one nation of Israel. "And I, if I should be exalted out of the earth, shall be drawing all to myself" (John 12:32). ("Drawing all to myself" is explained in the next verse: "Now this He said, signifying by what death He was about to be dying" - i.e. by crucifixion.)

If this 'all' means *without exception*, then it is not true, for all men have not been drawn unto Him. But it is most assuredly true that it means 'all' *without distinction*. That He tasted death "for the sake of everyone" (Heb 2:9) must be understood in the same sense, i.e. not limited as before to Israel but extended without distinction of nation, race, or creed (John 1:9 compare Titus 2:11).

In the old dispensation, God dealt according to man's work, now He deals according to *Christ's* work. In the old dispensation, Israel was to work for life, now we work from life. The law gave *works* for man to *do*, now grace brings *words* for man to *believe*.

'Do' distinguishes the former dispensation. 'Done' the latter. Then salvation depended on what man was to do. Now it depends on what Christ has done.

### **The Imprecatory Psalms**

These psalms have been a difficulty to most Christians. Unless we rightly divide the word of truth and appropriate them to the dispensation to which they belong, we will continue to feel the difficulty.

Their proper place, in the past, was in the dispensation of the law, and again in the future in the dispensation of judgement. These scriptures are in perfect keeping with the dispensation to which they belong.

For example, Psalm 58:10: "The righteous one shall rejoice, when he perceives the vengeance, he shall bathe his footsteps in the blood of the wicked one." This thought is repeated in Rev 19:1: "After these things I hear as it were the loud voice of a vast throng in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah!... for true and just is his judging.'"

Earlier we briefly discussed the use of parentheses. This can sometimes explain some difficulties, such as Psalm 109. If verses 6-19 are in parenthesis, then verse 20 refers to verses 1-5.

However, Psalm 137:7-8 does not admit of such an explanation. "Remember, O Yahweh, against Edom's sons, in Jerusalem's day, those who are saying, 'Raze it, raze it, even to its foundation.' Daughter of Babylon, the devastator, happy is he who shall repay you with your dealing which you dealt with us."

The spirit of the psalm is appropriate to the dispensation of law and judgement but not to the present dispensation of grace.

### **The Sabbath**

Obedience to 2 Tim 2:15 clears away heaps of confusion, and delivers from the bondage of law, in which so many are still bound. The ceremonial laws of the Sabbath were given to Israel, and not to the nations of the earth, pagan or otherwise.

The interpretation belongs to Israel and the nations would be wise to apply the principle of resting from servile labour one day in seven. But the law of the Sabbath is not abrogated, changed or transferred to any other day of the week. If anyone believes that the law is to be obeyed now, they are bound to "keep holy the Sabbath day". They have no choice in the matter, and dare not take the liberty of altering the law of God.

But in this present dispensation, Christians are "not under law, but under grace". We "were put to death to the law through the body of Christ" (Romans 7:4). "Yet now, we were exempted from the law, dying in that in which we were retained" (verse 6).

Paul wrote to those "who want to be under law" (Gal 4:21): "... how are you turning back to the infirm and poor elements (i.e. observations of the Mosaic system) for which you want to slave again anew? Days are you scrutinizing, and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, lest somehow I have toiled for you feignedly" (Gal 4:9-11).

This scripture is addressed to the Church of God today, and we need to fear for all who want to put themselves under law. Towards others and himself the Christian can apply those laws as far as they are compatible with his own Church epistles.

Romans 14:5-6: "One, indeed, is deciding for one day rather than another day, yet one is deciding for everyday. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind. He who is disposed to the day is disposed to it to the Lord..."

It is a matter of being persuaded in one's own mind, and not as being under law. We are not under the judgement of fellow believers in this matter. "Let no one, then, be judging you in food or in drink or in the particulars of a festival, or of a new moon, or of Sabbaths, which are a shadow of those things which are impending - yet the body is the Christ's" (Col 2:16).

The Sabbath laws are either still binding on us or they are not. If they are, then those who keep ‘the seventh day’ and not ‘the first’ are right. If they are not, then we are all “free from the law” and we have guidance in Rom 14:5-6, Col 2:16 and Gal 4:1-11.

If we apply the past dispensation into the present we will cause conflict with our fellow Christians.

We shall also be seeking to put not only the Church of God but also all the nations under the laws which were given by Moses to Israel alone.

### **The Kingdom**

Some past dispensational truths belong both to the past and the future. One concerns the kingdom, which leaps over the present.

They were truth in the past and will be truth in the future, but are not truth in or for the present. The present interval is passed over as though it did not exist. The past and future dispensations have to do with the kingdom. The present dispensation has to do with the Church of God. The past had to do with law, the future has to do with judgement, but the present dispensation has to do with grace.

Without this clear distinction we will suffer loss of blessing to ourselves and introduce confusion into our minds and contradiction into the Word of God. This is especially true if we take that which was spoken of the *kingdom* and understand it of the *Church* of God. If anyone holds that the kingdom is the Church they are at least being consistent, but they make no attempt to rightly divide the Word and treat language as being useless for the purposes of revelation.

If God says one thing and means another the Bible becomes an enigma, not enlightenment. Differences of interpretation will then become a source of division and controversy. This is a scandal and a stumbling block to outsiders.

The kingdom was proclaimed by John the Baptist and was the first subject of Christ’s ministry (Matt 4:17). But as it was rejected, it is now in abeyance until the time comes to set it up in divine power and glory.

Differences in terminology highlight the differences between the kingdom and the Church:

#### **KINGDOM**

“Set up” (Dan 2:44 & Acts 15:16)

#### **CHURCH**

“Built on” (Eph 2:20)  
 “Built together” (Eph 2:22)  
 “God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9)  
 “Built up” (Col 2:7)

We read also of the:

“Enjoyers of the allotment of the kingdom”	(James 2:5)
“Sons of the kingdom”	(Matt 8:12)
“Obtaining the kingdom”	(Luke 19:15)
“Perceive the kingdom”	(John 3:3)
“Entering the kingdom”	(Matt 18:3)

In no sense can anyone “enjoy the allotment of, obtain, perceive, enter into” the Church.

Among all the figures used for the Church, the kingdom is never used. We find it compared to a house (1 Tim 3:15), a temple (1 Cor 3:16-17), a body (1 Cor 12:27, etc), but never to the kingdom. The kingdom proclaimed in the past, and now in abeyance, is yet to come, hence the prayer, “Thy kingdom come.” But the Church is here now, and is soon going away. It is waiting to be “snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:14-17). If the Church is the kingdom, we should pray, “Thy kingdom GO!”

Again the Church is an election, hence its name *ecclesia*, which means a calling out. When the kingdom is set up, it will be universal and all embracing (Psalm 103:19; Rev 11:15).

Christ is now the Head over all, to the ecclesia which is His body (Eph 1:22, 4:15; Col 1:18), but He is never called its King. Much error and confusion is caused by the use of non-scriptural expressions.

The word *basileia* ‘kingdom’ does not mean the material country of the subjects. It refers to the sovereignty or administrative rule of the King. The Church necessarily finds its sphere and place within that rule. But in this case it is always the “kingdom (i.e. the sovereignty) of God” (Romans 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Col 4:11). Also, “the kingdom (or sovereignty) of the Son of His love” (Col 1:13).

Amid all the realms of this all-embracing sovereignty of God in heaven and earth, the Church has its proper, distinctive, and unique place. Whether angels or men, each has its own special place.

The Church of God is part of the Body of which Christ is the Head, “one *new man*” (Eph 2:15), “a *perfect man*” even “the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Although the Church has its own place in the sovereignty of God, it is never included in the more limited expression ‘the kingdom of heaven’ as it appears in Matthew’s gospel. This belongs peculiarly to Israel. Nor is the Church included in the wider, but yet limited, kingdom of heaven to which the Lord’s prayer refers; for the sphere of this is on the earth.

### **The kingdom (or sovereignty) of**

#### **HEAVEN**

has the Messiah for its King  
 is from heaven, and under the heavens upon earth  
 is limited in its scope  
 is political in its sphere

#### **GOD**

has God for its ruler  
 is in heaven, over the earth  
 is unlimited in its scope  
 is moral in its sphere

is Jewish and exclusive  
in its character  
is national in its aspect  
is the special subject of  
Old Testament prophecy

is inclusive in its character  
(including even the Church)  
is universal in its aspect  
is the subject of New Testament  
revelation in its wider aspect

All this is true, and yet it is equally true that, if we call the Church the kingdom, we are not “rightly dividing the Word of Truth”.

So although the Church comes within and under the divine sovereignty, we may not transpose one part of that sovereignty with another part, without causing injury to the whole.

When the Lord said to Peter, “I will be giving you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens...” (Matt 16:19), He did not mean the keys of the Church. Peter used these keys when he again proclaimed the kingdom in Acts 2:12.

### **The Various Gospels**

Not only is there confusion about the kingdom and the Church, there is also confusion about the various gospels of scripture. The word ‘gospel’ or evangel means good news. We need to ask, “What is the news that is so good?”

We read of the gospels of:

(1) the kingdom, (2) God, (3) the grace of God,  
(4) the glory, and of the (5) everlasting gospel

Do all these expressions mean the same thing? If God has not put these five gospels together, are we free to join them together? If God has distinguished them, can we say there is no distinction? Despite a common teaching there is more than one gospel.

The Gospel of the Kingdom was that the kingdom, the subject of Old Testament promise and prophecy, was at last ‘at hand’. Good news indeed for all who waited “for the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), who “looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (2:38), and who “waited for the kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43). Many believed this good news concerning Christ the King, and “trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:21).

But when that kingdom had been rejected, and the King crucified, it was again proclaimed to Israel, and the announcement made that the King was ready to return (Acts 2:38; 3:19-21) on the one condition of national repentance. But the making of this proclamation was still opposed by the people through their rulers (Acts 4:17-18) and the preachers of this ‘gospel of the kingdom’ were “threatened” (v 21).

When Peter’s ministry of the Circumcision ended in his imprisonment (Acts 12), and Paul was raised up and sent forth, it was with the added good news of grace. This was what is again and again claimed by Paul as “*my gospel*”. After the rejection and crucifixion of the King, the martyrdom of Stephen, and the imprisonment of Peter, the Epistle to the Romans was written. It opens with these words: “Paul a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, severed for the *evangel of God*.”

This was good news of a different character. This was news of *grace* pro-claimed, not to Israel only, or to any one nation, but to individual transgressors and sinners of the gentiles alike; to all *without distinction*. It was grace proclaimed to Jews who deserved wrath, and to gentiles who deserved nothing. Hence it is called the *evangel of the Grace of God*. This was further good news, as set forth in Romans and the other Church epistles. It was the good news that those who are in Christ are reckoned by God (and hence are to be reckoned by us) as having died with Christ and having risen with Him; and that when this gospel shall have accomplished its object and gathered out from Jews and gentiles all the members of the one Body, these shall be gathered together unto Christ, the Glorious Head in glory (2 Thess 2:1). This good news is called the Glorious Gospel, or better, the *Gospel of the Glory* of the blessed God which was, Paul says, “committed to my trust” (1 Tim 1:11).

In 2 Cor 4:4 it is called “the glorious gospel of Christ”, i.e. the good news of the ‘glory’ which is to follow the ‘sufferings’ of Christ; and which is to be the outcome of those sufferings. This good news is preached now. It is part of the good news of the Grace of God; for grace and glory are inseparably bound together.

When the preaching of this double gospel of grace and glory shall have closed, we read of another gospel which is for the dispensation of judgement: the *everlasting (or eonian) Gospel*.

It is not proclaimed until the very crisis of the apocalyptic judgements; after the judgements of the seven seals, and the seven trumpets and the unveiling of the Beast (Rev 13). Then, after the final judgements of the seven vials, seven angels make seven proclamations (Rev 14:6-20). The first is the proclamation of “the everlasting gospel” of mercy in the midst of judgement. It is the command to mankind to “Fear God.” What else, we do not know.

It announces God as Creator only. It is not “Repent, do this or do that”, but only “Fear God and give glory to Him.” It is strange that this gospel should be supposed to be the same as the gospel of the grace of God.

If we rightly divide these different gospels, we have harmony, consistency and truth.

### **The Sermon on the Mount**

Few portions of God’s Word have suffered more than this, because the one great requirement of the Word of Truth has been ignored. It occupies the greater part of the first of the four periods of the Lord’s ministry.

During the first period, the King and the kingdom were proclaimed. It begins at Matt 4:17 and ends at 7:29, and this occupies the whole of chapters five, six and seven. This so called ‘Sermon on the Mount’ has to do with the kingdom. The sole subject of the first period of Christ’s ministry was the laws of that kingdom. The laws were to be different

from the laws given by God through Moses at Mount Sinai, and very different also from the traditions which had made so many of them of non-effect.

Christ's teaching is in harmony with the truth pertaining to the kingdom, but not with that which pertains to the Church of God. It is appropriate to a dispensation of law and not to a dispensation of grace; to a past or future dispensation, but not to the present dispensation.

This is, of course, the case as far as *interpretation* is concerned. But, when it comes to *application*, we can apply truths of universal application so long as they are in harmony with truths addressed especially to the Church of God.

Here are two examples:

**Matt 5:18:** "Till heaven and earth should be passing by, one iota or one serif may by no means be passing by from the law till all should be occurring."

**Matt 6:21:** "...for wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

But these instructions are like a foreign language to us today:

**Matt 5:25:** "Be humouring your plaintiff quickly ..."

**Matt 5:25:** "... giving you up to the judge to the deputy ..."

**Matt 5:22:** "... shall be liable to the Sanhedrin."

**Matt 5:24:** "... Raka! leave your approach present at the altar."

**Matt 6:16-18:** "Now whenever you be fasting ..."

**Matt 6:33:** "Yet seek first the kingdom and its righteousness..."

**Matt 7:23:** "I shall be avowing to them that 'I never knew you...'"

**Matt 7:21:** "Not everyone saying to me 'Lord! Lord!' will be entering..."

Of those who teach these precepts as applicable today, how many obey them? Many of these instructions are impossible to obey today. Where does a person go to offer his present on the altar? (Matt 5:23-24). Much confusion is caused by interpreting the kingdom message as applicable today. The King was crucified. The kingdom is, therefore, now in abeyance. The precepts pertaining to it are also in abeyance.

Christ's own words in Luke 22:36 "*yet now*" (as mentioned earlier) not only warrant us in so treating 'the Sermon on the Mount' but compel us to do so. Otherwise, all is confusion.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

This occurs in the 'Sermon on the Mount' and forms an integral part of it. That it pertains wholly to the kingdom is clear. It is a prayer for that kingdom to come, in order that God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Its standard is law, and not grace. Forgiveness is sought not on the ground of grace, but of works, and not on the ground of mercy, but of merit.

The future and approaching tribulation is contemplated as imminent, if not present. The Evil One, the Beast is in power. None can buy or sell except those who have his mark (Rev 13:7). Daily bread must be miraculously 'given', if those who use this prayer are to be kept alive.

Christ's name isn't mentioned nor is it offered in His name or merits, as He Himself declared it should be (John 16:23-24). It is a prayer suitable to the time, while the kingdom was being proclaimed as 'at hand'. And again in the future when the Church has been removed, it will be seen how appropriate this prayer will be. The kingdom shall be again proclaimed as 'at hand'. The 'gospel of the kingdom' shall be again preached in the coming days of 'the great tribulation'.

### **The Priesthood**

Misapplying the truth about the priesthood which is true for the past and future dispensations but not for the present dispensation leads to false doctrine. It is urged that "all are priests", but this is just as incorrect as saying that some, or any, are priests. On earth, God has only recognized a priesthood which He Himself ordained and confined to the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:6) and to the tribe of Levi (Exodus 29:9).

To those who put themselves under the law, it was said, "Now, if you shall hearken, yea hearken to My voice and observe My covenant, then you will become Mine, as special possession, above all the peoples, for Mine is all the earth. As for you, you shall become Mine, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

That was a true promise and prophecy of and for Israel in the past dispensation. But Israel failed to fulfil the condition for national priesthood: "If you shall obey ... and keep My covenant." Hence the conditional promise, "You shall become a kingdom of priests," was not performed. The tribe of Levi was substituted for the nation and the national performance of that promise remains still in abeyance until such time as Israel shall return to the Lord.

Hence the prophecy was repeated at a later period in Isaiah 61. The Lord read of the prophecy in Luke 4:18-20. After the "day of vengeance" (which the Lord omitted, because it was still future) shall have passed, then it is declared of the nations as a whole, "And you, priests of Yahweh shall be called, 'Ministers of our Elohim,' to you shall be said" (Isaiah 61:6; 66:21).

In Rev 1:6 John announces the fulfilment of this prophecy when he gives glory to God for what He will then have done. "To Him Who ... makes *us* (John and his brethren according to the flesh) a kingdom and priests to His God and Father ..."

In Rev 5:9-10 the four animals and the twenty-four elders sing a new song referring to that future day, “For Thou wast slain and dost buy us for God by Thy blood out of every tribe and language and people and nation. Thou dost also make them a kingdom and a priesthood for our God, and they shall be reigning on the earth.”

Peter, who wrote specially to believers among the *diaspora* of Israel, could speak of *them* as the spiritual house (of Israel) and call them “a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices.” But in no case could this be said of believing sinners of the gentiles either then, or now, or in the future. Isn’t it strange that some who claim to be ‘priests’, do not also claim to be ‘kings’ in this day of grace? The fact is that there is no priesthood recognized by God on the earth during this present dispensation while Israel as a nation is excluded.

The Lord Jesus, “... if He were on earth He would not even be a priest ...” (Heb 8:4). The reason given is that, on earth, priesthood belongs to the tribe of Levi only and “our Lord has risen out of Judah, to which tribe Moses speaks nothing concerning priests” (Heb 7:14).

Christ *is* a priest, but His priesthood belongs to heaven and not to earth. It is “after the order of Melchizedek” and *not* “after the order of Aaron”. A priesthood in the Church of God today is an impossibility, for Christ never was a priest on earth and He would not be a priest if He were on earth today.

### **Baptism**

It is clear from the gospels that baptism has to do with the kingdom. Matt 3:5-6: “Then went out to [John the Baptist] Jerusalem and entire Judea, and the entire country about the Jordan, and they were baptized in the Jordan river by him, confessing their sins.” John was not a minister of the grace of God, but a prophet under the old covenant appointed to “prepare the way of the Lord”, who came to “confirm the patriarchal promises” (Romans 15:8).

His ministry was unique. His message was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” and he baptized those who believed his preaching and confessed their sins. The reason he baptized was in order that Christ “may be manifested to Israel” (John 1:31). Moreover, he testified of the One who should come after him, and who should baptize also but with “power from on high”. This the Lord Himself confirmed in Acts 1:4-5.

Although the kingdom was rejected and the King crucified, the Lord speaks of a future baptism, not of individuals but of all ‘nations’. Not in the name of Him as the Coming One, for He had already come, and would be with them, but “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19).

Yet, strange to say, this command was never obeyed on any of the several occasions in the New Testament when baptism was ‘administered’. Not once was this formula used. The practice was invariable. In Acts 2:38, Peter commands those of the dispersion who believed, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the *name of Jesus Christ*.” In Acts 8:16, Peter and John baptized in the “*name of the Lord Jesus*.” In Acts 10:48, Peter “bids them to be baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ*.” In Acts 19:5, (no matter whether this refers to those who heard John or Paul) it is certain that “they are baptized in the *name of the Lord Jesus*.” Paul, in Romans 6:3, speaks of “whoever are baptized into *Christ Jesus*.”

1 Cor 1:13: “Or into the name of Paul are you baptized?” is clearly contrasted in the name of Christ. There is no exception to this practice.

It is equally certain that in Matt 28:19-20, Jesus commands, “Going, then, disciple all the *nations*, baptizing them into the name of the *Father*, and of the *Son* and of the *holy spirit*, teaching them to be keeping all, whatever I direct you.”

This command speaks of *nations* (or gentiles) and thus excludes the Jews, for it is distinctly declared of them that “the people is tabernacling by itself alone, and among the nations it is not reckoning itself” (Numbers 23:9). The gospel of the grace of God is preached today to Jew and gentile alike, whereas the command is to disciple all nations. This present dispensation is eclectic and it is individual Jews and gentiles who are taken *out* of all nations.

Today, our work is not to ‘disciple nations’ but to preach and proclaim the gospel of the grace of God to individuals as lost sinners. Thus they may be taken not only from among the Jews but also from among the nations. We must preach the Word all the more earnestly because, as the days get darker, men will be less ready to “endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim 4:1-4).

The command in Matt 28 manifestly does *not* apply to conditions common to our experience. The only ground for this command is that “Given to Me was all authority in heaven and on the earth.” Although Heb 2:8 states, “All dost Thou subject underneath His feet” it immediately adds, “Yet now we are *not as yet* seeing all subject to Him.”

Not until a yet future dispensation of judgement will the gift of ‘all power’ on the earth be formally made and received. This is pictured in Rev 5:12: “Worthy is the Lambkin slain, to get power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!” But this is the only reason given for obedience to this command, “Go ye *therefore*.”

The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom will again be made. Matt 24:14: “And heralded shall be this evangel of the kingdom in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the consummation shall be arriving.” This will be accompanied by its companion ordinance of baptism. “Going then, disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit ...” (Matt 28:19).

That future baptism will not be into the name of the One Who was to come (as in the gospels), not into the name of the One Who had come and been rejected (as in the Acts), but into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit.

This will indeed be a work which will require ‘all power’ in order to secure the submission of Jews and Muslims, as nations to receive this baptism as the sign and token that they have acknowledged and submitted themselves to Christ, the Messiah, as their Lord and King. This national work is referred to in Matt 24:13-14: “Yet he who endures to the consummation, he shall be saved. And heralded shall be this evangel of the kingdom in the whole inhabited earth for a *testimony* to all the nations, and then the consummation shall be arriving.”

This command spoken in a past dispensation, about the future, disregards entirely this present interval. It contemplates obedience to it in the future and not in the present. The Lord in Matt 10:1-15 commissions the Twelve to immediately proclaim the kingdom to Israel alone. But in 22-23 passes over the present to a yet future proclamation, just as the dispensation today is leapt over in Isaiah 61:2 etc. mentioned earlier.

**Matt 10:22-23:**

Yet he who endures to the consummation, he shall be saved.

Now, whenever they may be persecuting you in this city, under no circumstances should you be finishing the cities of Israel till the Son of Mankind may be coming.

The same promise is made in:

**Matt 24:13-14:**

Yet he who endures to the consummation, he shall be saved.

And heralded shall be this evangel of the kingdom in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then the consummation shall be arriving.

If this coming be the same as the destruction of Jerusalem, the Twelve could not have proclaimed that the kingdom was ‘at hand’ for nearly forty years after it had been rejected, and the King crucified!

There is no hint that the disciples were persecuted and had to flee city to city during their ministry. On the contrary, they reported to the Master that it was a great success (Luke 10:17-19). The gospel record shows that they were with the Lord the greater part of His ministry. Christ said, “And lo! I am with you all the days till the conclusion of the eon! Amen!” (Matt 28:20). How was this fulfilled at that time, when He was about to go away? It seems forced to interpret this as the presence of the holy spirit.

It seems clear, therefore, that this proclamation is yet future. The command belongs to a past and future dispensation and is not operative during the whole of this present dispensation. It is strange that if the command belongs to this dispensation that the disciples never once attempted to obey it. The Lord continued with them for forty days, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). No mention of the Church. The disciples only asked questions about the kingdom. Not *whether* the kingdom was to be restored to Israel or not, but *when*.

We cannot suppose that Peter would disobey the Lord’s command within so few days. There can be only one explanation: they waited for the moment when it will be obeyed.

As long as the divine offer of the kingdom was open, baptism with material water was carried on. This gradually decreased until it stopped altogether when the offer of the kingdom was formally withdrawn in Acts 28:25-26. For a while the baptism with spiritual water, *pneuma hagio*, increased, on the principle of John 3:30.

Although mentioned in 1 Cor and Romans 6 (written during this period), it is not again referred to. In other epistles there is no mention of any ordinances, except to emphasize the fact that they no longer exist. Ordinances that have to do with the flesh have no place in the secret which was revealed to Paul.

When the secret was revealed to Paul, the Hebrew doctrine of baptism was left behind. The new doctrine of the ‘one baptism’ with *pneuma hagian* (a spiritual rather than a material medium) was brought in.

Making the Acts of the Apostles as a guide to church doctrine and practice (instead of the epistles that were especially written to the churches) has led to confusion and controversy.

**The Prophecy of Amos**

**Amos 9:11-12**

In that day, will I raise up the fallen booth of David,

And I will dike with stones its breaches, and its demolished places will I raise, and I will build it as in the days of the eon that they may tenant the remnant of Edom, and all nations over whom My name is called, (averring is Yahweh, the Doer of this.)

**Acts 15:16-18**

After these things, I will turn back. And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and its overturned structure will I rebuild, and I will re-erect it, so that those left of mankind shall be seeking out the Lord. And all nations, on them over whom My Name is invoked, is saying the Lord, who is doing these things known from the eon to the Lord is His work.

When James quoted Amos 9:11-12 in the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15:16-18) the Mystery had not been revealed, for, as we have seen, it was never the subject of Old Testament prophecy. This prophecy refers neither to the Church of God nor to the temple in Jerusalem, but to the ‘tabernacle of David’. This stood on Mount Moriah (2 Sam 6:17). It speaks of the heathen, the gentile nations, being called “in that day” by the name of the Lord.

Peter declared in the Council that God had chosen him to preach the gospel committed to him to the gentiles. Paul and Barnabas then described what signs and wonders God had wrought among the gentiles through them. James then stated that the words of the prophets *agreed with this*.

Amos’s prophecy showed that God would return and build again the tabernacles of David and bless the gentiles with Israel. God had done this through Peter proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, first to Israel (Acts 6-7) and afterward to the gentiles (Acts 8-12).

Now the time had come for the call to repentance, the one condition of this national blessing of Jews and gentiles (Acts 8-12). But the proclamation was unheeded. Peter's call was not obeyed. Shortly afterward came the judicial blindness which covers Israel's heart (Acts 28:25-28).

Gentile blessing in association with Israel is now in abeyance. Acts 15 refers to the gentile nations, not to the Mystery or the Church of God. The Mystery had not been made known. A correct rendering of this passage shows that "these things" had been "made known from the beginning". The present dispensation of the Mystery was "hid in God from the beginning of the world".

### **Son of Man**

This title of the Lord Jesus Christ belongs to Him in the past and future dispensations.

"The Second Man" and "the Last Adam" having *dominion in the earth* do not belong to the present dispensation. Occurrences of the word in Psalm 8, Matt 8:20 and Rev 14:14-18 etc all show this connection with the earth. This title occurs eighty-four times in the New Testament, eighty of which are in the four gospels. Acts 7:56; Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13, 14:4 are the other occurrences; not one in the Church epistles. They are all used in connection with His coming to earth to take up His great power and exercise His *dominion in the earth*.

We have no more to do with the Lord Jesus as 'the Son of Man' than the gentile woman of Canaan had to do with Him as the 'Son of David'. His reply to her when she made her plea based on that relationship was, "I was not commissioned except for the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matt 15:25).

We are brought into union with the risen and exalted Christ as "the *Son of God*" not in His title of "Son of Man". This shuts the Church out of the gospels and out of the tribulation of Matt 24 and out of all the passages concerning "the Son of Man". Imbued with the words in the church epistles, we instinctively reject any teaching bringing us into union with Christ as "Son of Man".

### **THE PRESENT NOT TO BE READ INTO THE PAST**

Just as we may not read the past into the present, so we may not read the present into the past. A few examples will suffice.

#### **The Mystery or Secret**

The Secret concerns the Church of God and was:

- "... a secret hushed in times eonian..." (Romans 16:25)
- "... in other generations, is not made known..." (Eph 3:5)
- "... which has been concealed from the eons in God..." (Eph 3:9)
- "... the secret which has been concealed from the eons..." (Col 1:26)

These are perfectly plain statements yet it has been suggested that this secret refers to the blessing of gentiles with Israel. The simple and conclusive answer to this is that such blessing was never a secret. In Gen 12:3 it is part of the very first promise ever made to Abraham. "And bless those will I who bless you, and those making light of you will I curse. And blest in you and in your seed are all the families of the ground."

The secret concerns a people taken out from both Jews and gentiles who were made "fellow-heirs" and members of the "same body" (Eph 3:6). If we accept that the mystery was kept secret until revealed to and by Paul, we shall look in vain to find it in the Old Testament or in the four gospels.

Christ said in John 16:12: "Still much have I to say to you, but you are not able to bear it at present." At that time the disciples could not have borne or understood the truth which was later revealed. We should not read into the gospels truth which was subsequently revealed. We dare not set the teaching of Jesus in opposition to the teaching of Paul. Both spoke by the Holy Spirit, both uttered the words given to them to speak.

The Lord Jesus said of Himself:

- "For He Whom God commissions is speaking God's declarations, for God is not giving the spirit by measure." (John 3:34)
- "My teaching is not Mine, but His Who sends Me." (John 7:16)
- "Now they know that all, whatever Thou hast given Me, is from Thee..." (John 17:8)

The Apostle Paul also spoke only the words given him to speak:

- "... given to us by God, which we are speaking also, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit..." (1 Cor 2:13)

If we take what Paul wrote and put in where the Lord left it out, we are attempting to flout the express purpose and design of the Holy Spirit.

### **Sons of God**

The title 'sons of God' is closely associated with the Church of God, those who are new creations in Christ Jesus. We must not read this usage into the Old Testament. The expression 'sons of God' is there eight times: Gen 6:2,4; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:6 and Daniel 3:25 and is used of *angels*.

'A son of God' denotes a being directly created by God, produced by Him in contrast with being produced by man. Angels are called 'sons of God' because they are a separate creation distinct from all others. Adam is a 'son of God' for the same reason. But Adam's descendants were not. Adam "created in the likeness of the Elohim" (Gen 5:1) begat a son "in his likeness, according to his image" (Gen 5:3).

As sons of the first Adam, we are 'sons of men'. But when we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10), "new creations in Christ" (2 Cor 5:17) then, in Him we are 'sons of God'. This Pauline usage of the expression

is, therefore, distinct from the usage in the Old Testament. If the expressions hadn't been confused, 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2,4, could not have been used of the sons of Seth.

### **Church**

In the Pauline epistles the word *ecclesia* or 'church' acquires a meaning which it never had before. This meaning therefore cannot be read into the word when used in the past dispensation. Paul uses this more restricted meaning - the Church of God - eleven times in his epistles. 'Ecclesia' means an assembly or congregation of *called-out* ones. Many groups, however, are called out from others.

Israel was a people called out from other peoples and nations. The tribal council of Simeon and Levi were called out from Israel. Worshipers assembling together before the tabernacle and the temple were called out of all Israel (Psalm 22:22,25).

The called-out ones in the period covered by the gospels and Acts are the 'sheepfold' of John 10:1-30. Verse 16 reads: "And other sheep have I which are not of this fold." These other sheep were called out by Peter (Acts 8-12). The called-out ones are a remnant of Israel. When Christ said in Matt 16:18: "Now I, also, am saying to you that you are Peter, and on this rock will I be building my *ecclesia*..." He could not have been referring to the "ecclesia in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38) or to the *ecclesia* of the Church of God in this dispensation. Those who heard these words could only understand them to refer to Hosea 1:10 and 2:23.

Christ had asked the question, "Who are men saying the Son of Mankind is?" But Peter said that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. At these words, Jesus *thenceforth* began to show His disciples that He must be coming into Jerusalem and be suffering (verse 21). Thus His sufferings are not mentioned until the announcement that, though the foundation stone was about to be rejected, it would yet be built upon. The *ecclesia* would yet be built on Him, the Messiah.

Romans 9:27: "Now Isaiah is crying out over *Israel*, if the number of the sons of *Israel* should be as the sand of the sea, the *residue* shall be saved..." This remnant is the *ecclesia* mentioned by the Lord in Matt 16:18. This future *ecclesia* of Israel is to be built *upon* Christ as the foundation stone. The church of God is also compared to a building, "... is growing *into* a holy temple in whom you, also, are being built together for God's dwelling place, in spirit" (Eph 2:22).

The Church of God then is now a spiritual building in Christ and is composed of Jews and gentiles. The *ecclesia* of Matt 16:18 is a future saved remnant of the children of Israel.

There are two other references in Acts 19 to an *ecclesia*. Verses 32 and 41 refer to a guild of Ephesian craftsmen. Verse 39 refers to a legal *ecclesia* - a town meeting, i.e. a duly summoned gathering of citizens in meeting assembled.

From all this it will be seen how necessary it is to confine the meaning of the word 'ecclesia' to the dispensation in which it is used.

### **THE FUTURE NOT TO BE READ INTO THE PRESENT**

#### **The Great Tribulation**

All believe it to be still future. Yet there is much confusion as to whom it will affect and to what extent. The confusion is caused by applying what refers to Israel in the future into the present dispensation.

The Church of God is assured that the day shall not overtake it as thief (1 Thess 5:14). They will be alive and remain at the Lord's coming forth into the air to receive them. Yet the Day of the Lord will burst suddenly upon a world which cries, "peace and safety".

The firstfruits (the 144,000 of Rev 14) are redeemed "from the earth" (verse 3) and "from among men" and *stand* before the throne. However the Church of God are already "*seated* together among the celestials in Christ Jesus".

The Body is one and so all, not some, will be together. They are one, not because of how holy or watchful they are or how much light each one has. Membership in the body of Christ is based on life, not light. It depends neither on wages nor works, but on the 'gift of God'. Not on the acquirement of knowledge or reception of man's traditions, but on the reception of God's grace.

The tribulation is distinctly stated as being connected with Israel. In Jer 30:7 it is called, "the time of Jacob's trouble" the crisis of the nation. It will not arrive until Israel returns to the land. The title of Christ as 'Son of Man' in Matt 24:27 shows that the Church of God is not here. "For even as the lightning is coming out from the east and is appearing as far as the west, thus shall be the presence of the Son of Mankind." This was discussed earlier.

Other indications are:

The Jews are in their own land "in Judea" (Matt 24:16) observing their own Sabbath laws (Matt 24:20).

They are under Mosaic law. This cannot refer to the Church of God which is "not under law" (Rom 6:14; 1 Cor 9:21).

The 144,000 of Rev 7 and 14 specifically belong to the tribes of the children of Israel, each tribe mentioned separately by name.



## **Sundry Prophecies**

### **Psalm 2:8:**

“Ask of Me, and I will give the nations as Your allotment, and Your holding, the limits of the earth.”

This promise to Christ is quoted as though it is fulfilled by the preaching of the gospel today. Such an interpretation would be impossible if the next verse is quoted, “You shall smash them with a club of iron, like a vessel of a potter, You shall shatter them.”

### **Isaiah 2:2:**

“And it comes in the days hereafter, established shall be the mount of Yahweh and the house of the Elohim, on the summit of the mountains, and borne by the hills.”

This is supposed to teach the future extension of the Church of God, and its universal blessing to the nations. And this despite the previous verse distinctly stating that it was, “The word of Yahweh which came to Isaiah concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”

### **Isaiah 60:1:**

“Light up! Light up, Jerusalem! For come has your light, and the glory of Yahweh over you is radiant.”

Whose light? A few verses earlier is the answer, “And there comes to Zion the Redeemer, and ‘He shall turn back transgression from Jacob’, averring is Yahweh.” It is the Redeemer upon the seed of Jacob in the future, nothing to do with the Church and its missionary enterprise today. Isaiah 60:3 clearly shows it will be the Jews who will be the head of the nations. “And the nations will go to your light, and kings to the brightness of your radiance.” The gentiles shall bring their wealth and their glory to Israel.

### **The Day of the Lord**

The Day of the Lord is the day when the Lord shall rule the world in judgement and righteousness. Today and all previous dispensations, judgement, rule and power in the earth have been committed to man. It is called “Man’s day” in 1 Cor 4:3. Man has been a failure - good government is the great want of the age. But the “Lord’s Day” is coming and John saw it in vision, its course and its end (Rev 1:10). It will not overtake us as a thief in the night because we are not in darkness, we have the prophetic word, a light in this darkness (2 Peter 1:19). Hence we are “the children of the light, and the children of the day” (1 Thess 5:1-5).

### **ONE PART OF THE FUTURE NOT NECESSARILY TO BE READ INTO ANOTHER PART OF FUTURE**

There are many Advents, Resurrections and Judgements which are still future. We must rightly divide them to know the truth respecting them.

### **The Parousia (or Presence) of Christ and the Advent of Christ**

The *Parousia* is described by Paul in 1 Thess 4:16: “... for the Lord himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command... thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Again, in 2 Thess 2:1: “Now we are asking you, brethren, for the sake of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to Him.”

Nothing was known about the Presence of Christ until it was revealed by Paul in 1 Thess 4:13 - 5:11. Not only was it revealed so that we would not be ignorant, it is also for our comfort (1 Thess 4:18 and 5:11).

The *Advent* is the gathering together of Israel to their Messiah and their land, and is connected with the Day of the Lord, a fearful day of judgement. As mentioned earlier, the Day of the Lord has nothing to do with the Church of God.

Both the Presence and the Advent of Christ are, of course, yet future. They both involve Christ, but affect different groups at different times and places.

One example will suffice to illustrate our precept about the future. These two scriptures show a future event without any indication of a time gap:

### **Micah 5:2:**

“And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, inferior to be among the mentors of Judah, from you shall one fare forth for Me to become the Ruler in Israel; yet His farings forth are from aforetime, from days eonian.”

### **Zechariah 9:9:**

“Exult exceeding, daughter of Zion! Shout daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king shall come to you! Righteous and endowed with salvation is He. Humble and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of a she-ass.”

Until the time of their fulfilment, readers were unable to tell whether there was an interval between the “faring forth” of Micah and the “coming unto Jerusalem” of Zechariah.

Both scriptures tell of the same coming of the Lord but separated by some thirty-three years. He “fared forth” at His birth in Bethlehem and “came unto Jerusalem” shortly before His crucifixion (Matt 21:1-10). Despite the difference in years, it is still known as His first coming.

In a similar way, Christ’s “coming forth” into the air and His “coming unto” Jerusalem in the Day of the Lord may be described as His second coming.

But all these events are distinct and should not be confused. We cannot say exactly what the interval is between the Presence and the Advent of our Lord.

## The Resurrections

There are several resurrections mentioned in the New Testament. The order is stated in *1 Cor 15:20-28*: Christ, the firstfruits, is already raised. Then they who are Christ's at the 'former resurrection'. This is immediately before the 1000 years.

*Rev 20:5*: "Thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to the Father." So this is after the 1000 years.

In *1 Thess 4*, we have a special revelation of another resurrection at the time of the 'rapture'. The previous ones were the subject of Old Testament prophecy. This special resurrection had been a secret but was now revealed "by the word of the Lord" (*1 Thess 4:15*). Two events are spoken of:

First, "the dead in Christ shall be rising first."

Second, "thereupon we, the living shall at the same time be snatched away."

This is the closing event of this present dispensation. We cannot therefore say there is one 'general resurrection'.

## The Judgements

Just as there are different resurrections, there are different judgements connected with them.

First, there is the appearance of the risen and changed saints before the *bema* or dais of Christ. *2 Cor 5:10*: "For all of us must be manifested in front of the dais of Christ, that each should be requited for that which he puts into practice through the body, whether good or bad." The dais is where rewards and prizes are given, not sentences or judgements. We have already been judged in the person of Christ, and will be there in all the glory and perfection of our resurrection bodies. "Christ will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory" (*Phil 3:21*).

Second, is the resurrection described in *Matt 25:31-46*: "Now, whenever the Son of Mankind may be coming in His glory then shall he be seated on the throne of His glory, and in front of Him shall be gathered all the *nations*." The Jews will therefore not be there. The throne will be on earth, (see *Isa 34:1-2*; *Ezek 39:21*; *Joel 3:1-2, 11-12*). The judgement is based on one specific work: how the nations treated the Jews. This can only be nations alive at the time, for there is no word about resurrection.

The reward is "enjoyment of the kingdom made ready for you from the disruption of the world." This kingdom is upon the earth, and before the Millennium when He shall appear with His holy angels to execute judgement.

But even this judgement is not final. After the thousand years Satan "must be loosed for a little season" in order to show that man remains the same in spite of all the evidences of the glory of the millennial reign. The nations which revolt under Satan will be destroyed by a special judgement, "And fire descended from God out of heaven and devoured them" (*Rev 20:9*).

The great and final judgement is described in *Rev 20:11-15*. It is immediately after the 1000 years and is before "the great white throne". The people are those who lived during the 1000 years. This is the "resurrection of judging" (*John 5:29*). Not one will be there who has not died.

All these several judgements are still future but we have to rightly divide them as to their order, nature and character.

## THE CANONICAL ORDER MUST BE DISTINGUISHED FROM THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

By canonical order is meant the order in which the teaching appears in the canon of scripture. By chronological order is meant the order in which books were written and events happened. These two may not always be the same in their teaching. One may be dispensational and the other experimental.

All God's works and ways are perfect. All can see His works but He must make known His ways. *Psalm 103:7*: "He made His ways known to Moses, His activities to the sons of Israel."

**The Tabernacle** is an example. The historical order when God ordered the making of the tabernacle is:

the Ark of the Covenant	(Exod 25:10)
the mercy seat	(Exod 25:17)
the table	(Exod 25:23)
the candlestick	(Exod 25:31)
the tabernacle	(Exod 26)
the altar of burnt offering and the gate	(Exod 27:1,9,16)

But for those for whom it was given, began at the other end with the gate; ending with the mercy seat.

## The Great Offerings

God begins (*Lev 1*) with:

the whole burnt offering,	
then the meal offering	(Lev 2),
the peace offering	(Lev 3),
the sin and trespass offering (reckoned as one)	(Lev 4,5).

But His people began at the other end and approached with the sin offering.

## The Four Gospels

Just as it required four great offerings to describe the various aspects of Christ's death, so it required four gospels to describe His earthly life. The offerings cannot be harmonized into one; neither can the four gospels be harmonized into one, as if they needed 'harmony'.

## 1 Samuel 16:1 - 18:30

The events in the Book of Samuel are not in chronological order. But then, why should they be? A human author may do as he pleases, so why can't God's Holy Spirit? The chronological order is:

1 Sam 16:1-13	The call of David by God
17:1-18:4	The call of David by Saul
16:14-23	David enters Saul's house
8:5-30	David leaves Saul's house

The spiritual significance and teaching of these events are shown in the structure of the canonical order:

A	16:1-13	David's call by God. The Spirit coming upon him.
B	16:14-23	Saul: The Spirit departing from him.
A	17:1-18:4	David's call by Saul.
B	18:5-30	Saul: The Spirit departing from him

Instead of the bare historical details, we are shown the reason for them. It is the underlying counsel of God; Saul is rejected and God's Spirit taken from him. Thus we have the double lesson without losing either.

## The words of Jeremiah

It is clear to even the natural man that the Book of Jeremiah is not written chronologically. Here again the experimental teaching depends entirely on the canonical order of the chapter and not on the chronological order. This can be seen in the structure:

A	1:1-3	Introduction
B	1:4-19	Jeremiah's commission given
C	2-20	Prophecies addressed to the Jews (Josiah)
D	21-35	History, etc (Jehoiakim) <i>(Not in chronological order)</i>
E	36	Baruch. His mission to Jehoiakim
D	37-45	History, etc. (Zedekiah) <i>(In chronological order)</i>
C	46-51:64a	Prophecies addressed to the gentiles
B	51:65b	Jeremiah's commission ended
A	52	Appendix

It can be seen from the structure that the history of Jehoiakim is not in chronological order and yet that of Zedekiah is. Jehoiakim was the king who cut up the words of Yahweh with a penknife. Is it not appropriate that his history be cut up with the pen?

If we carefully study the canonical portion connected with Jehoiakim, we shall note its perfection.

F	21	Defeat and captivity proclaimed
G	22-23:8	Promise of the Branch
H	23:9-40	Whirlwind False Prophets Rejection
J	24	Figs Discrimination (Captives & Remnant)
K	25:1-11	Time Seventy Years
L	25:12-38	Nations (The Cup)
M	26	Proclamation in the Court of Yahweh's house
L	27	Nation (The Bonds and Yoke)
K	28	Time Two Years
J	29	Figs Discrimination (Captives & Remnant)
H	30-31	Whirlwind The Book Restoration
G	32-33	Promise of the Branch
F	34-35	Defeat and captivity proclaimed

The canonical order is perfectly constructed. The experimental teaching is of far greater importance than the mere chronological and literary order.

## Paul's Epistles

The canonical order is the order in which we are to study them.

The words of Christ in John 16:12 are "still much have I say to you but you are not able to bear it at present." Had the Lord spoken what Paul later received by revelation, the disciples would have been unable to bear them. Time, therefore, does enter into the interpretation of words. There could be no doctrine until the facts had taken place on which they were based.

"The things of Christ" were the doctrines concerning Him which are revealed by the Holy Spirit in the epistles specially addressed to churches. If this is not true, how has the Lord's promise that "the spirit of truth will guide you into all truth" been fulfilled?

Earlier it was shown that Paul's epistles needed to be divided off from those epistles which are not addressed directly to the Church of God. They are those addressed to the dispersion (1 and 2 Peter and James) and another group of general epistles (1, 2, 3 John and Jude). Whatever the order of these groups in the ancient Greek manuscripts, they always consist of the same epistles and are thus preserved distinct and separate from the others.

In some manuscripts, the dispersion group follows the Acts, followed by the general group and the Pauline group. The work *The Church Epistles* (see Appendix) deals with their canonical order, but their chronological order is not without direct teaching.

The canonical order is:

A	Romans	Doctrinal Dogmatic instruction	(Paul alone)
B	Corinth	Reproof for <i>practical</i> failure as to Romans teaching	(Paul, Sosthenes, Timothy)
C	Galatians	Correction for <i>doctrinal</i> failure as to Romans teaching	(Paul and all the brethren)
A2	Ephesians	Doctrinal Dogmatic instruction	(Paul alone)
B	Philippians	Reproof for <i>practical</i> failure as to Ephesians teaching	(Paul, Timothy)
C	Colossians	Correction for <i>doctrinal</i> failure as to Ephesians teaching	(Paul, Timothy)
A3	Thessalonians	Praise and thanksgiving for a model church, manifesting the fruits of Paul's teaching in Acts 17:1-3 in holiness of life and missionary zeal.	(Paul, Silvanus, Timothy)

These are the lessons of the canonical order. But the chronological also has its own teaching for us, which is dispensational. This order is not so important or so essential to our salvation, hence they are not given to us chronologically.

None of the churches Paul wrote to had ever seen John's gospel. Paul never saw any of John's writings. That gospel, therefore, cannot be necessary to understand the epistles or to the formation of churches.

It was some 20 years after Paul that John was inspired to write. Hence we are not to read subsequent revelations into previous writings. This is the generally accepted chronological order:

1	Thessalonians	AD 52	from Corinth
2	Thessalonians	AD 53	from Corinth
1	Corinthians	AD 57 (Spring)	from Ephesus
2	Corinthians	AD 57 (Autumn)	from Ephesus
	Galatians	AD 57 (Winter)	from Corinth
	Romans	AD 58	from Corinth
		<b>AD 62</b>	<b>Acts 28:25-26</b>
	Ephesians	AD 62 (Spring)	from prison in Rome
	Colossians	AD 62 (Spring)	from prison in Rome
	Philippians	AD 62 (Autumn)	from prison in Rome
	1 Timothy	AD 67	from Corinth
	Titus	AD 67	from Corinth
	2 Timothy	AD 68	from prison in Rome

We should not read into the Acts or Paul's earlier epistles that which was revealed later. Until Acts 28, Peter's offer of the kingdom (Acts 3:19-21) was still open. In AD 33, Stephen saw the Lord Jesus still standing (Acts 7:55) for He had as yet not "sat down" at the right hand of God (Heb 10:12 in AD 68).

Isaiah 6:10 had been twice quoted by Christ as not yet fulfilled, Matt 13:15 (repeated in Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; and John 12:40). Not until Acts 28:25-26 did Paul pronounce this threatened judicial blindness for the third and last time.

Clearly, not until after Acts 28, could any declaration of the Mystery be made. Until then, nothing could be said which would be incompatible with the possible acceptance of Peter's offer.

These examples will suffice to illustrate importance of this precept.

*This is the end of this condensed version of "How to Enjoy the Bible" by Dr Bullinger.*

*You may wish to read the original printed version or visit web sites for the full original version.*

*We pray this introduction to his book has enabled you to ENJOY THE BIBLE.*

## APPENDIX

**Dr Ethelbert William Bullinger** (1837-1913) was ordained in 1862, he served as curate in Bermondsey, Norfolk and Notting Hill. He was vicar of St Stephen's, Walthamstow from 1874 to 1888. He was also the Secretary of the Trinitarian Bible Society from 1867, until his death. He received a Doctor of Divinity degree from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1881.

He was the author of many books, including:

*A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English  
and Greek New Testament* (1887)

*Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (1898)

and editor of -

*The Companion Bible* (1909 - 1922)

In the original edition of this book, some footnotes referred to works written by Dr Bullinger and others. In this version, these are listed below.

### WORKS by Dr Bullinger

#### BOOKS

1. *The Giver and His Gift* (Word studies on the Holy Spirit) Publisher: Kregel Publications
2. *The Names and order of the books of the Old Testament*
3. *The Church Epistles*
4. *The Sabbath*
5. *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*
6. *Christ's Prophetic Teaching*
7. *The Names of Jehovah in the Book of Esther in Four Acrostics*
8. *The Rich Man and Lazarus*
9. *The Mystery*
10. *The Vision of Isaiah*
11. *The Transfiguration*
12. *The Kingdom and the Church*

#### PAMPHLETS

- The Lord's Prayer*  
*The Sons of God*  
*The Pauline Epistle*  
*The Good Deposit*  
*The Lord's Day: Is it a Day of the Week or the Day of the Lord?*

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### WORKS by other authors

1. *How God Inspired the Bible* Rev J Paterson Smyth
2. *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* Ginsburg; Publisher: Trinitarian Bible Society

## **The Concordant Version and a Pattern of Sound Words**

The guiding principle used in making this version is expressed in Paul's instruction to Timothy — "Have a pattern of sound words."

The Concordant Version is unique in that it translates with a consistent vocabulary—no single word represents more than one word in the original scriptures. The translators made great efforts to exclude human opinion in the renderings, and based decisions as much as possible on internal evidence.

At first reading the language might seem a little difficult because of a few unfamiliar words. The use of these words was necessary to preserve the accuracy and reflect the meaning of the original text. This strangeness will quickly disappear as the meaning becomes clear.

There are immense benefits to be gained from this version. Repeated expressions are easily recognized. Subjects that were once clouded or vague become clear, and chains of thought are easily followed. With clear understanding the words of scripture are more easily committed to memory.

The Concordant Version is of importance because to a great extent it avoids colouring God's word with the opinion of the translators. The work was done in two main stages, a literal translation—which does not make readable English—and an idiomatic version that is effectively an everyday English version.

A Greek text was prepared by collating the information from the three most ancient complete Greek texts, paying particular attention to corrector's notes. This work took many years, and when completed, was found to be almost identical to Weymouth's Resultant Greek Text.

Before translation was begun every word in the original language of the New Testament was examined in every context by a team of scholars. A single standard word was then chosen to accurately convey the meaning of this Greek word into English.

Idiomatic similes were then given to each of these standard words, so the text would make readable English. Thus, for example the Greek *katargeo* is given the standard DOWN-UN-ACT, its exact meaning. But this does not make readable English, and the similes nullify; discard; exempt; abolish; make unproductive are used as necessary, but are exclusive to this one word and not used for any other Greek term.

Another example is *upodema*. The literal meaning of this word is shown in its standard UNDER-BIND. This was a piece of leather bound under the foot with leather thongs, and in English we recognize this as sandal, which is used in the version— UNDER-BINDINGS are sandals.

In this way the accuracy of God's Word is preserved to a far greater extent than is possible by other means.

*Remember... The original scriptures, the words spoken by Jesus and the words penned by the apostles, were already concordant.*

Further details of the Concordant Literal Version are available at [www.concordant.org](http://www.concordant.org)