

## Dispensational truth and common sense

Quite a number of earnest believers object most strongly to any attempt rightly to divide the Word of truth, out of a mistaken idea that such “division” is an unsanctified attack upon the unity of the faith, robs the child of God of his portion in the Lord, and generally plays into the hands of the enemy. Yet, if one were to become acquainted with the everyday life of these same folk, one would find that the principle of “right division” was practised by them all day and every day. Are such so opposed to the principle of “right division” that they would tolerate being served with their luncheon in the following order:

Lentil Soup with Pineapple and Custard.  
Roast Beef, Yorkshire Pudding and Marmalade.  
Coffee and Mayonnaise.

Or, if you accompanied them to business, would they wear flannels or a bathing costume at the Board Meeting? Would they ruin their business by mixing up all the Departments, failing to divide aright between buyer and seller, between the manufacturing and the financial Departments?

Would you expect that, apart from sheer necessity, your business friend (who so strongly condemns the “right division” of the Word) would sleep in the bathroom? or would execute his motor repairs in the drawing room? You most certainly would not, and we will not multiply examples further otherwise this page will read like sheer lunacy.

By what process of faith or reason therefore can we say, that where “right division” is the one common principle observed by all men at all times and in all spheres, yet in the matter of understanding the Word of God this basic principle must be looked on with suspicion, and they who use it treated as “dangerous”? Let us put aside any prejudice we may entertain, and just face this matter of “right division” afresh. We will look at the matter from the following points of view:

- (1) This principle of right division is a command written in Scripture, and therefore binding upon everyone that nameth the name of Christ.
- (2) The expression “rightly divide” was clearly understood in the days of Paul, being found in the common Version of the Old Testament of his day.
- (3) Every Protestant preacher of the Gospel must, and always does, make one clear application of “right division”, however he may condemn its further application by others.
- (4) Christ Himself has left us an example that we must in all common honesty respect and follow.

The consideration of these four items will be limited to the space available, and then only in a very simple way.

### (1) The Command

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

To be (a) approved unto God, and (b) unashamed of one’s work are so important that no one will set aside lightly any honest attempt to comply with this command, however much in so doing some items of one’s creed may need re-adjusting.

## (2) The Meaning

The reader may be thankful that, in this particular, he is independent of dictionaries and doctors, grammar or Greek. All that he needs to know is:

(a) Timothy was the son of a Jewess and a Greek (Acts 16:1).

(b) He lived in Asia Minor, and would naturally read the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament Scriptures.

(c) In Proverbs 3:6, he would find (and doubtless already knew) the simple meaning of right division: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths". (So reads the Authorized Version. Timothy's Bible, however, would read, "rightly divide thy paths").

Right division therefore is as simple and as sane as to follow intelligently the directions on the signpost that one meets at the fork in the road. All the redeemed are walking along the road of life, but all are not necessarily journeying to the same destination. Some will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5); some will walk the streets of the New Jerusalem (Heb. 11:10; Gal. 4:26; Rev. 21:2,24-27); others will find their inheritance far above all principality and power, in "heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3,20,21). Surely it is a commendation of "right division" that those who practise it accept these three Scriptures simply as they are written, and feel no desire to alter (even mentally) "earth" in Matthew 5:5 to "heaven". Yet, they who oppose this division of Scripture and claim the Sermon on the Mount, as well as Hebrews 11 and Ephesians 1 for the same company, must explain satisfactorily this evident difference.

As the believer comes to the fork in the road, he looks at the signpost and reads: Kingdom and Church, and acts accordingly. Or he reads: Peter and Paul (as Gal. 2:7,8); or: Body and Bride. By believing what he reads and acting upon that belief, confusion is avoided and a clear conception of his particular calling is attained.

## (3) A Protestant Principle

Every true believer in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has no hesitation in "rightly dividing" the Scriptures under the headings "Law" and "Grace", "Works" and "Faith", "Moses" and "Christ". Whole chapters and indeed whole books of the Old Testament are thereby set aside as undispensational by those who thus believe. The principle is conceded by those who oppose it most. We only take it to its legitimate conclusion, whereas they stop after having made a good commencement.

## (4) The Example of Christ

If the believer can see this principle of "right division" applied by Christ Himself in the course of His ministry, no further argument of our own will be necessary. For by our attitude to His teaching we must all at last be judged.

In Luke 4:16-21 we have the record of the opening ministry of the Lord. He stood up in the synagogue of His native village and commenced to read Isaiah 61. He had not, however, concluded the verse which is the second in our version, when He closed the book, sat down, and said:

"THIS DAY IS THIS SCRIPTURE fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

There was something unusual in our Lord's procedure. Why did He so abruptly stop? Why did He not even read to the end of verse 2? The explanation is that He was "rightly dividing the Word of truth"! Had He read one sentence more in Isaiah 61 He could not have said to them at Nazareth: "THIS DAY is THIS SCRIPTURE fulfilled in your ears", for the next sentence says: "and the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61:2). A comma merely, in our English Version divides the two sentences - "the acceptable year" and "the day of vengeance". Yet this comma represents at least 1900 years. The first sentence refers to the first advent of Christ, the second

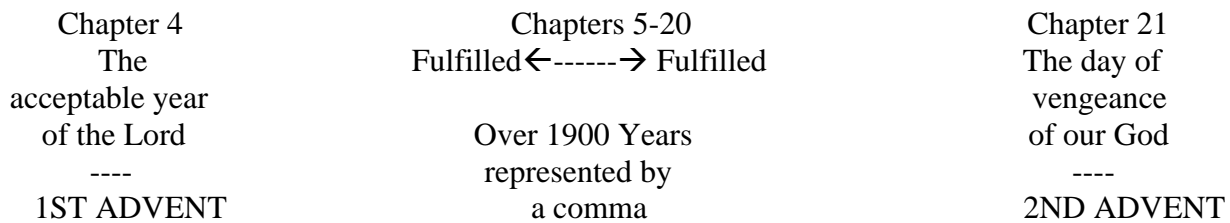
sentence refers to His second advent. How easy it would have been to have read straight on, but the last sentence was not within the scope of the truth He then wished to emphasize.

Now there are some who feel that this “right division” of the Word of God robs them of much truth. This is a misunderstanding of the facts, and our Saviour’s example just referred to reveals that no part of the Word of God is laid aside by right division - all is needed, and all is accepted - for in Luke 21:22 we find the Lord placing the day of vengeance at the time of His second coming:

“These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled”.

The following diagram may enable the reader to see how this right division of truth places the two sentences of Isaiah 61 in their dispensational setting:

Luke’s Gospel



Here we must leave the matter. In the space of this leaflet we cannot do more than seek to quicken the interest of the believer. As a consequence may many be “approved” unto God, “unashamed” of their work, realize their calling, appreciate the wondrous variety of the different dispensations, and believe, without reserve, all that God has said by:

RIGHTLY DIVIDING the Word of truth.