

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS #92

RIGHT DIVISION AND ITS USE

4:28

LET HIM THAT STOLE STEAL NO MORE: BUT RATHER LET HIM LABOUR, WORKING WITH HIS HANDS THE THING WHICH IS GOOD, THAT HE MAY HAVE TO GIVE TO HIM THAT NEEDETH.

Dishonesty in the life of a Christian is one of the first things the world will notice and condemn. Evasion of taxes, short weights, petty pilfering, misrepresentation of articles sold, and the like do not become the believer. And when members of the clergy can not and will not pay their debts, it makes a lot of people wonder about Christianity.

When Zaccheus climbed down from the Sycamore tree he resolved that if he had defrauded anyone in his tax gathering, he would restore it fourfold. So here may be the idea that one should put away all such things and labor to make restitution as much as possible.

In Ro 12:11,13 the believer is exhorted not to be lazy and to be ready to share with those in need. Likewise in 1Th 4 the believer is to endeavor to be quiet, mind his own business, work with his hands, so that he may walk honestly in the sight of the world and that none may lack necessities.

In Acts 20:33-35 Paul has his last visit with the Ephesian elders and reminds them that he has worked with his hands to support himself in the ministry and then tells them that they ought to labor in order to support the weak and to remember that the Lord had said, IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE. In these last days it is indeed a rare thing for a pastor to work and help the flock instead of insisting that the flock support him.

We have met with those who were professors, but who were very careless with their dealings and did not hesitate to take advantage of others. The excuse was, *everybody does it*. The proverb today is, *get the other fellow before he gets you*. Of course not all are that way and we find quiet men who would rather give a neighbor \$100 outright than to be accused of *pulling a fast one* in a business deal. We do not mean to infer that all are bad. But in general the public has gotten some ideas of Christianity that make us sorry.

So it is a good idea to make a quiet resolve to quit the shameful habit in every form and do it decisively from now on so that none may stumble. But lest there be a negative repentance in this matter, let it be positive in that we labor not only to make reparation but also to share with the needs of others. Taking an interest in others will have a lot to do with our success in no longer trifling with the old sin.

Christianity is not for the lazy man. In religion a man can find a soft place by being a priest or the like and living off the people. But Christianity has no place for such a life. Each is to work and produce. It is only right that those who are able and will not work should be allowed to starve.

We conclude by reminding you and ourselves that the distributing and sharing are to be with the brethren, those of like faith. Nowhere does the Word tell us to share with unbelievers.

It is not likely that any readers of *TFT* are not acquainted with 2Ti 2:15 and its exhortation to rightly dividing the Scriptures. Practically all who read the Bible at all make some division of its contents. Probably the simplest division is in distinguishing the Old Testament from the New Testament.

This then is a beginning. Whether it is a right division is another question for you to work on. There may be some question about all of what we call the NT rightly carrying that name. So in the simplest of division we may run into some difficulties.

Now as to the OT, we find that it is under the heading of Moses and the Prophets at times. But the Jews covered the whole of it by the term Moses, The Psalms, and The Prophets. There were other divisions, but these will suffice for now.

The NT has been divided into Gospels, Epistles, History, and Prophecy. This may be altered by some. But you can see that there is a tendency to divide up the Bible for study and understanding. Now we are told to do that rightly. That brings in problems.

For convenience, many have divided the Word into time divisions, calling these divisions *dispensations*. But a strict usage of the word *dispensation* does not allow this. But division into some time periods does have some advantage and those who wish really to get into it will see, for one part at least, that there are 4 periods of about 500 years connected with Israel. This is just one aspect.

Then there is a division into those parts that are for Gentiles and those for Jews. This may prove profitable. But again there are going to be difficulties connected with it.

There is another way of dispensational division that has proven most profitable for those who really want to get into things. It is about the only method that erases the seeming contradictions in various parts of the Scriptures. It is a method that helps one to understand what is the plan and purpose of God for the ages. This sort of study is seriously recommended for those who wish to know the purpose of God and conform their lives to it. For those who are merely curious, this method will prove very confusing and totally unacceptable to the flesh or old nature. This method brings out the two *ekklesias* or dispensations of the kingdom and the church, at the same time recognizing the fact that not all the saved belong to a church, but that it is from among the saved of the earth that these groups are chosen. One body is called for an earthly purpose and ministry, and the other for a heavenly purpose or ministry. The rest of the saved of the nations will occupy the new earth. With these bare facts in mind, you may be able to go on and find great treasure in the Word. Do not neglect to investigate what is the dispensation of the mystery, or the church which is the body of Christ with Him as Head. You will find that this aspect is truth for today.

These general truths should help you to get started out on your own.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE MYSTERY

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

What the dispensation of the mystery might be is still a mystery to many good folks. The following short explanation is not to teach what it is, for that would be useless. We cannot teach that which must come by revelation. In M't 13 the Lord was giving out the mysteries of the kingdom. It was for His disciples to know these things. To others in parables, for it was not for them to know.

The dispensation of the mystery has to do with a chosen people. They were chosen for this particular place in Christ before the overthrow. These people are known as nations or Gentiles. The reason for this appellation is that there is no difference in flesh in any respect in this dispensation.

The dispensation of the mystery has to do with a certain sphere. That sphere is not the earth, but the heavenlies. All other dealings before the revelation of the dispensation of the mystery had to do with an earth program and an earthly people, that is, a people that had the hope of future life on the earth. Also their sphere of service was in connection with the peoples of the earth. Not so with the dispensation of the mystery. The sphere of service is to make known the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers of the heavenlies. It is also in that sphere that those who endure will also reign with Him.

In the earthly program of Israel, not only was there a division and a difference in the flesh between Israel and the Gentile, but there was also warfare in the flesh and the Canaanite was to be exterminated. Not so with the dispensation of the mystery. There is no warfare or wrestling with flesh and blood. But there is a conflict in the spiritual realm, with spiritual wickedness. No carnal weapons are to be used here.

In the earth sphere Christ will be known as King of kings and Lord of lords. He came as the Messiah of Israel. He will be a Savior to the nations of them that are saved in the new earth. But in relation to the dispensation of the mystery, He is the Head of the church which is His body.

The dispensation of the mystery has no rituals to perform, Sabbaths to keep, or covenants of promise. It has no fathers. It has no law. It has no prescribed place of worship. Not being an earthly people, there are no divisions in the church which is His body; no one set above or over another, but all on an equality. So it is impossible for it to have an earthly organization. It is an organism.

This church has no Head but Christ. It has no authority delegated to it. All authority rests in Him. It cannot open or close its doors to anybody. The members are adopted, placed as sons. No one can join it. No one can boast of his membership for he did nothing to get it. We are His workmanship.

Those who are initiates will understand what is set forth here. Those outside will find that the mystery is still a mystery to them. But if they earnestly seek, they shall find!

73. What is hell? Where is it? What is done there? Who go there? How can one get out? When will hell end? Is it hot? Is it cold? Is it noisy, or quiet? Is it dark, or light? Have any inventions come out of it? Is Satan there? Are there demons in it? Do they have pitch forks there? Can one learn any lessons there? Has any person been there and came back? Have any been there and brot back reports of what it is like? Do babies go there? What is the signal to leave it? Do all hear the signal? When hell is cast into the lake of fire, what happens to those who never got out? Do you expect to go to hell? If so, what do you expect to do there? Do you think you would be uncomfortable there? Do you expect to see any of your friends there? (And we could go on *ad infinitum*)

74. By what means is salvation obtained?

75. How was salvation made possible?

76. How can salvation be thru the mercy of God and at the same time God be just?

77. Who provided the sacrifice for sin?

78. How was the power of God unto salvation obtained? Ro 1:16

79. What brings salvation to men? Tit 2:11

80. What relationship does salvation have to believers? M't 1:21

81. What place does works have in the plan?

82. Upon what basis is salvation today?

83. What place did the law have?

84. If the law can never make one righteous, then how can one obtain the righteousness required?

85. What is salvation? Is it permanent, or is it temporary (a lease)?

86. What if a believer sins or believes not?

87. To what portion of Israel did the Lord come? M't 15:24

88. To what part of the world did He come? ITi 1:15.

89. Does salvation include Justification, Forgiveness, Gift of Eternal Life, The Hope of Glory?

90. Who may be saved? Who may not be saved?

91. What steps lead to salvation?

92. Is salvation something to boast about?

93. Can you name 4 points included in the finished work of Christ?

94. What work was finished in Joh 17:4?

95. What was accomplished in Joh 19:20-30?

96. Is there a need for sins to be forgiven today? He 10:7-12. 2Co 5:19.

97. Why will not Christ have to die again? Ro 6:9,10

98. Is there any reason why a saved person should serve sin? Ro 6:6

99. What did Christ's resurrection prove to us? Ro 4:25

100. Will the Lord ever come to the earth again? Ac 3:20,21

101. What is the expectation of the believer who is in the church of the dispensation of the mystery? Col 3:4

102. Is resurrection vital to our faith? 1Co 15:17,18 Psa 2:7 Ac 13:33 Ac 2:29-31

103. Why must Christ be raised from the dead as the last Adam? 1Co 15:45-58

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES #1

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD #21

DENTON C. ABBEY

This is the name given to a book written by Dr. Luke, a companion of Paul. As is indicated in the first part, it is the continuation of a certain treatise written before. Of course we do not have to guess. It is the gospel according to Luke.

In the first verse we note the word BEGAN. This may be significant. In the gospel Luke recorded what the Lord had begun both to do and teach. If that was a beginning, then can we take it for granted that Acts is a continuation?

That it is a continuation is evident from the fact that part of the gospel is repeated here in the fore part of Acts. So then we can truthfully say that the Acts of the Apostles is a continuation of what the Lord began both to do and to teach while He was here on earth.

If we want further light on the character of Acts, we should read again the gospel according to Luke to see just what it was that the Lord was doing and teaching. That will be the theme of Acts, we are sure. Of course we have those who think that the apostles started out to do one thing and ended up doing another. But the unity of Acts is so perfect that such a thot cannot be entertained for a moment. Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was a consistent writer. He did not get off on some sort of tangent, but he held to the theme and developed his subject according to the most rigid rules of composition and rhetoric.

Now all the 4 gospels agree in that John the Baptist preceded the Lord, preparing the way and preaching that the kingdom was at hand. They also agree that the Lord Himself took up the same subject, that the kingdom was at hand. That was the message given to the 12 and to the 70 to go out and preach. So if the gospels were the beginning of the theme of the Acts, then we can rightly decide that the Acts was concerning the kingdom.

When we get down to verse 3 in Acts 1, we find that the Lord taught the apostles 40 days concerning the kingdom. Of course tradition says that it was not the kingdom, but the church that they were to preach. But somehow, I prefer to believe the Book rather than certain professors of theology. The Book is the safest guide into truth. But it would also be very strange that they should be prepared for preaching the kingdom, and then disobey orders and preach the church. The critics would say that this was just another of those apostolic mistakes!

We must note that these instructions were given to the 11. No one had been chosen to take the place of Judas until the Lord ascended.

If you are good at figures, tell us how long before Pentecost the ascension was. Not so easy, is it? Just where do you begin to figure the 50 days? This can be a great study in itself. Note that the first day of the week is really the first of the Sabbaths in the Greek. And there were 7 Sabbaths till Pentecost from the waving of the barley sheaf. See what you make of it.

They were told not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. What was that promise? We'll see next time.

Perhaps if I would begin with a skeleton outline for this study it might help. We will fill in the references and build on the structure.

As I mentioned in last month's article, 2Co 4 begins by the word THEREFORE which refers us back to ch. 3. Chapter 5 can be placed in the same context as 4, as they are of the same discourse and close as nite and day. So going back to our outline, we find--

THEREFORE (SEEING WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY, explained in ch. 3).

WE FAINT NOT (4:1), KNOWING THAT HE WHICH RAISED UP THE LORD JESUS SHALL RAISE US UP ALSO (4:14).

WE FAINT NOT (4:16), FOR WE KNOW THAT IF OUR EARTHLY HOUSE OF THIS TABERNACLE WERE DISSOLVED, WE HAVE A BUILDING OF GOD (5:1).

THEREFORE (5:6), WE ARE ALWAYS CONFIDENT, KNOWING THAT, WHILST WE ARE AT HOME IN THE BODY, WE ARE ABSENT FROM THE LORD. BUT WE ARE WILLING RATHER TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

This will give you the trend of Paul's thinking. The passages left out are either words of explanation or associated subjects. Now to retrace our steps.

In 3:6-8 Paul is talking about this ministry. He remarks in verse 6, HE (God) HATH MADE US ABLE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT--NOT OF LETTERS (law) BUT OF THE SPIRIT. The next 12 verses contrast the ministry of the Spirit with the old ministry under the law. The crux of his ministry is centered in verse 9, FOR IF THE MINISTRATION OF CONDEMNATION (law) BE GLORY, MUCH MORE DOTH THE MINISTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEED GLORY. Then in verse 12, SEEING THEN THAT WE HAVE SUCH A HOPE which is echoed in 4:1, SEEING WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED MERCY, WE FAINT NOT--KNOWING (4:14).

The context between verses 1 and 14 in ch. 4 are related only in that suffering is connected with this ministry. Then after talking of the abundant grace for their sakes (verse 15) Paul again repeats verse 16, WE FAINT NOT--FOR WE KNOW THAT IF OUR EARTHLY BODIES WERE DISSOLVED WE HAVE A HOUSE (a body) NOT MADE WITH HANDS IN HEAVEN. Then in 5:6 he picks up the thread of thot again, THEREFORE-- Just where he started out in ch. 4, THEREFORE WE ARE CONFIDENT KNOWING THAT WHILE WE ARE IN THIS BODY WE ARE ABSENT FROM THE LORD--BUT ARE WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THIS BODY AND TO BE PRESENT WITH THE LORD.

5:4 gives further light on this problem. Here Paul speaks of being burdened at the thot of being unclothed. Now this certainly means the death state, for in verse 3 he desires that he might not be found naked, but yearns for the cloak of immortality which would be the new life and body.

It is pertinent to the problem at hand to know that our verse in question should read, WE ARE CONFIDENT, I SAY, AND WILLING RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY, AND TO BE HOME WITH THE LORD.

Remember to read that verse carefully!

INTERROGATIONS

THE EDITOR'S DESK

7. Was HE SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST, AND WITH FIRE fulfilled at Pentecost in Acts 2? There was no baptism of fire at Pentecost. This fire is explained in Mal 3:2. It is a time of testing or trial of Israel. It is yet to come. The great tribulation will be the baptism of fire for Israel like as their experience in the furnace of Egypt. Note that in Ac 1:5 the Lord says, FOR JOHN TRULY BAPTIZED WITH WATER: BUT YE SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST NOT MANY DAYS HENCE. Here He does not mention the fire for that did not come in a few days, but is still future. This is another example of the Lord's rightly dividing the Word. cf. Lu 4:18, 19 & Isa 61:1, 2.

8. How can the mystery be a new thing not revealed in the OT when it says in Eph 2:20 that the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets? It all depends on who these apostles and prophets are. In Eph 4:11 we find that the risen Lord chose apostles and prophets for the new order. Upon these is the church of the dispensation of the mystery founded. As usual, the key is at hand.

9. In 1Sa 8:5 the people said, MAKE US A KING LIKE ALL THE NATIONS. Was it not against the will of God that Israel should have a king? It was God's will that they should have a King when the time was ripe. It was also His will that there should be a Millennial kingdom and a King in the future. The thing that was not right in their request was that they wanted a king like those of other nations. They did not aim high enough. They should have asked for a king far superior to those of other nations. That it was in the plan of God that they have a king is evident from Ge 49:10, THE SCEPTRE SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH.

10. What is included in the expression THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN (Ac 3:21)? In the context there is a mention of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. This does not mean that this refreshing is somewhere outside of the Lord's presence, but in His immediate presence. So that has to do with His coming. Christ will be sent, the One whom the heavens must retain till a certain time or till certain things come to pass. Now we must be careful. The *all things* that are to be restored are the *all things* that are to be restored prior to the Lord's coming. For we are aware of the fact that there are a great many things that will be restored after His coming. So we must stay with the context. We must see what things the prophets say are to be restored in connection with the coming of Christ to the earth scene. The great fault of many is that they include more than is warranted.

11. Did the prophecy of Joel have a fulfillment at Pentecost? No. Read carefully Ac 2:14-21. Peter is trying to explain why the apostles and others are behaving so strangely and speaking in dialects. Peter says that this Holy Ghost manifestation is what Joel was speaking about. That spirit was at Pentecost, but the signs and wonders are yet to come.

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WE ARE ENCOURAGED by all the letters of appreciation received lately. Also we have really enjoyed all our visitors who have come recently. The latch-string is out. Come and see us. But it is better to let us know first.

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