

# Making Sense of

**Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Tim. 2:15)**

## **#1: THE HEAVENLY/EARTHLY DISTINCTION**

To understand God's Word we must "rightly divide" it. We "rightly divide" it when we make the same distinctions in the Bible that God makes. Last time we saw that God makes a basic distinction in His Word between His heavenly and earthly purposes. The importance of this cannot be overstated. God has placed His entire written revelation within the context of this distinction. The Bible opens with it in Gen. 1—the old heaven and the old earth—and it closes with it in Rev. 21—the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, we ignore it at our own peril. Everything God wants us to know is wrapped up in His purposes for heaven and for the earth.

With these two spheres of activity in mind, God immediately focuses our attention on the earth, and what He is doing to establish His glory there. He created mankind, placed them in the Garden, gave Adam the charge to rule over His abode or kingdom—everything is centered on the earth (Gen. 1-3). Adam fell, but God's intentions for the earth did not. Step-by-step God unfolded His plan—He spoke of a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15). He spoke to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob of a land and a people (Israel) (Gen. 12-13). He spoke to Moses of earthly blessings. He spoke to David of a King who would rule the world through Israel in a Kingdom on earth (II Sam. 7:8-13). He spoke to the prophets of a time when Israel's Kingdom would reach **"from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth"** (Zech. 9:10; 14:9), and all the nations of the earth would come to worship God in Jerusalem (Is. 60).

The whole Old Testament is a record of

God's revealed program to establish His glory on the earth through Israel. Then God fell silent for 400 years. (That is the blank page in your Bible between the Old and New Testaments.) Turning that page over, we enter the Gospels and see that Israel's long awaited Messiah and King had arrived and her Kingdom was at hand. Many religions and denominations say God began something new in the Gospels. But what do the Scriptures say? Listen to the Prophet Zacharias' words about what God was doing at that time: **"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed His people...As He spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began"** (Lk. 1:68-78). Did you catch that? What God was doing in the Gospel period was according to what had been spoken since the world began.

Now, we can say a lot of things about the Gospels, but one thing we *cannot* say is that God was starting something new and was making a distinction in His Word there. No, He was still dealing with Israel in accord with His program to establish His glory on the earth just as He had spoken of *since the world began*—running from Zacharias through all the prophets down through David and Moses and all the way back to the Patriarchs. If we make a distinction in the Gospels, if we say God began something new there, then we make a distinction in the Bible that He does not make. We will be "wrongly dividing" it. God does not place a distinction in the Gospels; neither should we.

Exiting the Gospels, we enter into the Book of Acts. Most evangelical and fundamental even dispensational Bible teachers say God definitely began something new in early Acts. They say that with Israel's rejection of her Messiah and King, God began a new program with a new people, the Church, the Body of Christ. Some go so far as to call the Day of Pentecost the birthday of the Church. But what do the Scriptures say? Listen to what Peter and the 12 said about what God was doing in early Acts, remembering that they had been taught directly by Jesus Christ for 3 1/2 years in His earthly ministry, had just come out of 40 days of direct instruction from the Resurrected Lord, and had been filled with the Holy Spirit: **Ye men of Israel...repent and be baptized** and Jesus Christ would come back from heaven to usher in the **"times of refreshing"** just as **God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began** (Acts 3:19-21). Did you catch that? In early Acts, God was still dealing with Israel in accord with what had been spoken of since the world began.

Now, we can say a lot about early Acts, but one thing

we *cannot* say is that God began something new there. He was still dealing with Israel in a program that He had spoken of since the world began. If we make a distinction here, if we say God started something new on the Day of Pentecost, then we make a distinction in the Bible that He does not make. We will be "wrongly dividing" it. God does not place a distinction in the Gospels nor does He make one in early Acts; neither should we.

## **#2: THE MYSTERY/PROPHECY DISTINCTION**

Now, if the Bible stopped in Acts we might think that God never began something new. We might assume that He has only one people and one program which He had been progressively revealing since creation. Today He is just continuing what He had been doing throughout history with Israel according to *what had been spoken of since the world began*. Many say exactly this. But the Bible did not stop in early Acts. It went on with the Risen Lord raising up a new Apostle with a new ministry (Acts 9). Listen to what Paul says about what God was doing through him. Be warned! If we have been paying attention, this verse is meant to startle us; it is meant to shake our universe. Read it carefully: **Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began**" (Rom. 16:25)

Did you catch that? The Holy Spirit uses the exact same structure He had used with Zacharias in the Gospels and Peter in early Acts—but then changes the ending! He does this to alert us. To wake us up! If God used flashing neon signs in His Word, one would go here. **THIS IS THE PLACE TO MAKE A DISTINCTION!** If words have any meaning, if language has any ability to convey information, then we must distinguish between a program that *had been spoken of* since the world began and one that *had been kept secret* since the world began. God makes a distinction in His program and people with the raising up of the Apostle Paul; so should we. If we make a distinction in the Bible here, then we make the same distinction that God makes. In short, we will be "rightly dividing" God's Word. We will be workmen who need not be ashamed.

