

Making Sense of God's Word: Part 3

Over the past few months we have been looking at some of the major distinctions God has made in His Word. First, we saw that God distinguishes between two purposes—one to establish His glory in the earthly sphere and the other to establish His glory in the heavenly. Second, He distinguishes between two programs—one that was spoken of since the world began (Prophecy of the OT and Gospels), and one that was kept secret since the world began (Paul's Gospel and the Revelation of the Mystery). Third, He distinguishes between two peoples—the nation Israel and the Church, the Body of Christ.

These are the most fundamental distinctions God has made in His Word. He has a purpose to establish His glory on the earth in accord with what He had spoken of since the world began with the nation Israel. Just as importantly, God has another purpose to establish His glory in the heavenlies in accord with what He had kept secret until He had revealed it to and through the Apostle Paul, with the Church, the Body of Christ.

We “rightly divide” His Word when we approach each Bible passage with these distinctions in mind. We need to ask: Does this passage have to do with God's plan and purpose for the earth with Israel as revealed in the Old Testament and Gospels? Or does this it

have to do with His plan and purpose for the heavenlies with the Body of Christ as revealed in Paul's Epistles?

Let's see how rightly dividing works. In Gen. 17:10-14, the Bible commands circumcision if God's people were to profit from His covenant. But in Gal. 5:2-4, it says that if God's people are circumcised today Christ profits them nothing. In Deut. 32:46 God tells Israel that she is under the Law, but in Rom. 6:25 God tells His people that they are not under the Law but under Grace.

In Is. 66:17, the Bible says eating pork is an abomination. But in I Tim. 4:4, it says just as emphatically that it is not. In Matt. 6:25-34, Jesus told His followers to give no thought to food or clothing for tomorrow. In I Tim. 5:8, Paul says that those who do not provide for tomorrow are no better than the infidels. Who do we follow—Jesus or Paul? Old Testament or New Testament? The Gospels or Paul's Epistles?

Which way do we go? Who do we follow? Is there any sense in it? Perhaps we should side with God's enemies and give up the Bible, convinced that it is hopelessly confused and full of contradictions? Before we go to that extreme, let's see what happens when we apply the principles of “right division.”

When we make the same distinctions in God's Word that He does, we discover that these are not contradictions at all. We see that God has dealt in different ways with different people at different times and for different reasons. Gen. 17:10-14, Deut. 32:46, Is. 66:17 and Matt. 6:25-34 all have to do with God's people Israel in relation to what had been spoken of since the world began regarding God's purpose to establish His glory on the earth. Gal. 5:2-4, Rom. 6:25, I Tim. 4:4 and 5:8, however, all have

to do with the Church, the Body of Christ, in relation to what had been kept secret since the world began regarding God's program to establish His glory in the heavenlies.

There are no contradictions. There is only God's two purposes, two programs and two peoples working together to fulfill His eternal plan for the universe. By divine design they differ, yet at the same time they work together in perfect harmony to fulfill His plan for His creation.

This is the way rightly dividing works. Contradictions and confusion quickly begin to disappear, and God's Word opens up. 2000 years ago, God explained to Paul that in view of Israel's rejection of her Messiah, Jesus Christ, He had temporarily set aside the earthly purpose He had spoken of since the world and was now ushering in a heavenly purpose through a new program that had never been spoken of before involving a new group of believers called the Body of Christ.

Therefore, it is especially within the writings of Paul that we find our instructions and learn of our provisions for what God is doing today. There are no contradictions. We can eat anything we want. There is no confusion. Physical circumcision avails us nothing today, rather it is the spiritual circumcision made without hands that matters. There is perfect accord. God is now dealing with His heavenly people on the basis of Grace not Law. All this makes perfect sense when we “rightly divide.” Doing this, we will follow Paul's instructions as Christ's ambassadors on enemy territory during this Dispensation of Grace.

