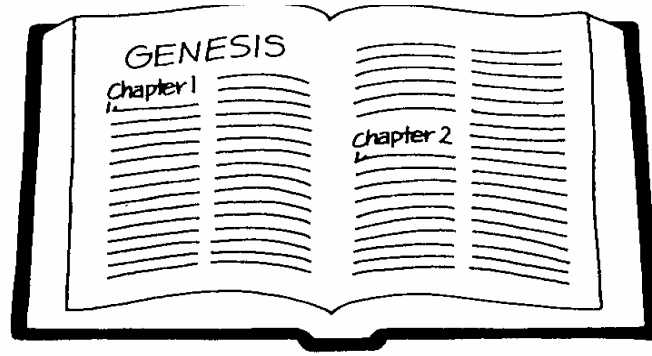


Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Correspondence Course #3



Introduction and Review:

The Bible is a valid book. There are Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic Manuscripts (cf. Lesson #1) that prove its authenticity. It is composed of sixty-six books that came about by inspiration (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is a book, too, that must be handled or interpreted properly (II Tim. 2:15). The process of interpretation is termed 'hermeneutics.' This is a biblical practice (cf. Lesson #2). The Bible is a book that is to be examined in light of its explicit and implicit language. In addition to explicit and implicit statements, there are examples which are to be followed as well (I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 4:9 etc.). Truth can be known; to say otherwise is to deny that we can know Jesus (Jn. 14:6; Eph. 5:17).

Lesson three shall examine the divisions of the Bible. Keep pressing onward in your studies!

Revelation:

God's revelation to man has occurred in two distinct ways. First, God has revealed himself through his **creation** (Psalms 19:1ff). Because God has revealed himself in this way, mankind is without excuse for not having faith in Him (Romans 1:18-23). A second way in which God has revealed himself is through the **gospel** message (I Cor. 2:6-13; Gal. 1:11-12). The gospel is defined simply as good news. When we append Jesus' name to the gospel (gospel of Christ), the emphasis is on the good news regarding the salvation of man through the blood of Jesus Christ

(Rom. 5:1-4; I Cor. 15:1-4). There is only one God and this fact is proved by creation and revelation (Cf. Isa. 45:18-19).

God's revelation has occurred in three distinct times. First, God revealed himself to the Patriarchs. God communicated to individuals such as Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:2-3), Noah (Gen. 6:13-14), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), Jacob (Gen. 35:1ff) and many others. This time period is often referred to as the **Patriarchal Age**.

The second dispensation of time in which God revealed himself to man is known as the **Mosaic Age**. During this time, God communicated directly with Moses that all Israel would know his will for them (Ex. 33:7-11; Lev. 26:46).

Lastly, we find God communicating to mankind through his son Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2). This is commonly referred to as the **Christian Age**.

Two Covenants:

The word covenant is defined as, "an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not to do something specified" (Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary pg. 495). There are two types of covenants found in the Bible. First we find the parity covenant and secondly we find suzerainty covenants. These two words are not found in the Bible, however their definitions are.

A parity covenant is an agreement made between two equals and a suzerainty covenant is an agreement made between two whom are not equal. We find a host of examples of each of these in the Bible. Our interest, for the purpose of this study, is in the suzerainty covenant. **This covenant entails law** and is the type we find God making with man. The Psalmist said, "**He has sent redemption to his people; He has commanded His covenant forever: Holy and awesome is His name**" (Psalms 111:9).

We cannot over emphasize the fact that a covenant is law. Therefore, God's covenant is inseparably connected to God's grace and mercy (Jer. 9:23-24). Moses told Israel, "**keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do**" (Deut. 29:9).

God's word reveals two suzerainty covenants made with man. The first was given through **Abraham** (Gen. 12:1-4; 17:9-17). The second covenant is through **Jesus** (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-12). Let's examine each of these.

God's covenant through Abraham

Genesis 12:1-4 reveals that God promised Abraham, "**in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.**" Genesis 17 reveals that this promise was sealed with the covenant of circumcision. The apostle Paul helps us in our understanding of the implications regarding the promise God made to Abraham. Paul said, "**Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is**

Christ" (Gal. 3:16; Cf. Gal. 3:8 too). Thus Jesus would ultimately fulfill the Abrahamic covenant (Matt. 5:17)!

To this covenant with Abraham was "added" the Mosaic Law. Again, the apostle Paul said, "**what then is the law (Mosaic)? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator**" (Gal. 3:19). Thus the Mosaic Law was added to the Abrahamic covenant so that sin would be identified as a violation of God's covenant with man. Consider what Paul told the Romans, "**for by the law (law of Moses) is the knowledge of sin**" (Rom. 3:20). Again, Paul stated, "**Is the law (of Moses) sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet**" (Rom. 7:7).

There are **three purposes of the Mosaic Law** revealed in scripture: **(1.)** To identify sins (as stated above). **(2.)** To restrain sin (cf. I Tim. 1:9-10). **(3.)** To serve as a tutor that would bring man to Christ (Gal. 3:24). This last purpose helps us tremendously. Man needed to see his undone and hopeless condition that he would look to and long for the coming Messiah who would take away sin! Thus by deductive reasoning we see that the first covenant had its limitations!

Limitations of the first covenant:

- A.** It could not remove sin (Heb. 9:13-15; 10:1-5).
- B.** It was temporary (Matt. 11:13; Heb. 8:13 etc.).
- C.** It was only given to the Jewish nation (Deut. 5:1-3; Ex. 20:1-2; Rom. 3:1-2; 9:1-5 etc.).

The second covenant through Jesus

The limitations of the first covenant led to the second covenant through Jesus. Jeremiah the prophet had foretold of this 'new covenant' which would replace the first (Jer. 31:31-34). The timing of this event was important. The apostle Paul said, "**but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons**" (Gal. 4:4).

When man understood the limitations of the first covenant, it drove him to long for the second under the Messiah (Isa. 45:22). The first provided only expiation (covering) of sins (Leviticus chapters 1-7; Heb. 10:1-4). As stated above, the first covenant had its limitations and all knew it (I Pet. 1:10ff). The author of Hebrews said, "**for if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second**" (Heb. 8:7).

It is through Christ alone that forgiveness of sins occurs (Heb. 9:13-14). While Jesus was instituting the Lord's supper in Matthew 26, He said, "**for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins**" (Matt. 26:28).

There are no limitations placed on the new covenant:

- A.** Sins are removed through the blood of Jesus (Matt. 26:28, Heb. 10:14).
- B.** The new covenant is not restricted by time. The author of Hebrews said, "**For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified**" (Heb. 10:14).
- C.** The new covenant is not limited to race! The apostle Paul said, "**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise**" (Gal. 3:27-29).

Concluding thoughts:

God, through his mercy and kindness, has revealed his will to man that all may be saved (II Peter 3:9). Man from the beginning disappointed God in that he sinned (Gen. 3:1-8). God had a remedy for this situation before the foundation of the world was even laid (Eph. 1:3-6). Jesus would lay down his life (Gen. 3:15 to Jn. 3:16). This plan was brought through Abraham and was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16). However, under the first covenant with Abraham, forgiveness of sins was not possible. Sins were remembered year by year instead of being taken out of the way (Heb. 10:3). When the "**fullness of time arrived**" (Gal. 4:4), God brought for his only begotten Son, Jesus. Jesus was to initiate a new and better covenant (Jer. 31:31ff; Heb. 8:7). A covenant is an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons to do or not to do something specified. Simply worded, a covenant is a law! God has specified his law (II Jn. 9-11). If no law exists for man to follow the necessary conclusion is that sin does not exist. Since every thinking man and woman realizes sin exist (I Jn. 1:10) all must conclude that law exists (I Jn. 3:4). Paul said, "**where there is no law, neither is there transgression**" (Rom. 4:15). If mankind desires to take advantage of the promises God has offered and escape the consequences of sin, he must abide by the covenant agreement. Herein will the grace of God be realized, when we do his will as Jesus tells us to do (Matt. 7:24-27; Jn. 15:7-14). We will examine God's grace in lesson four and give scriptural references to what one must do to take advantage of God's grace in lesson seven.

Questions:

1. What are two distinct ways in which God has revealed himself to man?
2. List three distinct time periods in which God revealed himself to man:
3. Define the word covenant:
4. Is a covenant a law?
5. What are two types of covenants we find in the Bible?
6. The Abrahamic covenant was first. How is the Mosaic Law associated with the Abrahamic Covenant?
7. List three limitations of the first covenant:
8. Do these limitations apply to the second covenant through Jesus? Please explain:
9. Thought question: After completing this lesson, how do you suppose the grace of God is connected to his covenants?