

# Rightly dividing the word of truth

*.. just as Paul instructs Timothy – ‘Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’*

*Peter Michell Copyright 1999.  
This publication can be freely copied.*

***Other titles:***

***\*ICCC – Transformed Working life series:***

Inherent Power

Work is a 1st class calling

No one can serve two masters

Hope - the certainty of future blessing

Faith or presumption

Hearing God speak

Working from rest

Renewing the mind

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Fruitfulness

(To access printed copies at Amazon – type Transformed Working Life in the search box.)

***\*Other booklets written for ICCC***

Powered by grace

Works of power - now is the time

Stand tall - take your position

***Other publications***

\*Will the church be caught away

\*Explaining the future.

\*So that's what its all about (overview of the bible account)

\*What shall we do with money?

Daniel (introductory level)

Revelation (introductory level)

\*Ostrich Christianity

\*Israel and the church not in competition

\*Favour - enjoying the children's bread.

All booklets are available as free PDF downloads at [www.freebiblebooklets.com](http://www.freebiblebooklets.com)

- Indicates printed copies available from Amazon.co.uk or .com or.EU to access type Peter Michell in the search box)

## **Contents**

Introduction

Chapter 1 'Modus operandi' for different times

2 An overview of the dispensations of the Kingdom of God

3 The time from creation to Abraham

4 The 'Age of Israel.'

5 This present age.

6 The millennial rule of Jesus Christ

7 Should Christians keep the Law?

8 Practical application.

9 Other practical advice for understanding the scripture

Appendix The chronological evidence supporting dispensations.

Scriptures relating to the Law.

## **Introduction.**

This booklet proposes that it is clear from the scriptures that, as well as there being matters which are applicable throughout time, the Lord God gives different instructions for different periods of time, thus requiring us to rightly divide that which applies in the current period of time from that which does not.

Our immediate 'proof texts' for this proposition would be Micah 4:3, Isaiah 2:4 and Joel 3:10.

Isaiah and Micah record that:

*'They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.'*

.....while Joel has the exact opposite!

Failure to rightly apply the scripture at the right time could have dire consequences in this example – like turning up with a pruning hook only to find it is a time of war!

So these verses illustrate very well the importance of knowing which instructions apply to which period of time. Paul wrote to Timothy like this, *'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'*  
2 Timothy 2:15

Paul used the word 'dispensation' to describe the revelation given to him of the period of grace that we now inhabit. Among those who will find themselves ashamed in due course 'dispensation' has become an unacceptable word. Dispensation has the meaning of administration - and it is clear that God's administration or 'house rules' differ from time to time.

'Rightly dividing' is translated literally 'cut straight.' The word of God needs to be cut into parts and needs to be cut accurately.

In addition to discussing the correct division of the scripture the last chapter gives a few tips for greater understanding.

## Chapter 1 'Modus operandi' for different times

('Modus operandi' means mode of operation)

We are seeking to establish that there are different dispensations in the operation of the Kingdom of God. The word 'dispensation' has been translated from the Greek 'oikonomia' which means 'the administration of a household.' It is sometimes translated 'stewardship.'

A quick review of the diet God has allowed man to enjoy, will illustrate how the Kingdom 'house rules' have changed from time to time.

### The example of 'food rules' for different times.

Perhaps the easiest example to follow are the 'rules' God has given mankind regarding what he can eat.

In the beginning we find that mankind is vegetarian - *'And God said, See I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.'*  
Genesis 1:29

After Noah's flood we find man is told that, *'every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.'*  
Genesis 9:3  
(In verse 4 Noah is told not to eat the blood.)

Later on in time God calls Abraham and separates a people unto Himself. This people becomes the nation of Israel. Through Moses God gives them some very specific dietary instructions.

You could refer to Leviticus chapter 11 for example, where verse 2 starts -

Speak to the children of Israel saying, *'These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are in the world .....*' and then there follows detailed instructions regarding diet.

The scripture records that when Jesus came He declared all food clean:

*'So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him,*

*"because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"* Mark 7:18-19

This is seen also in the vision Peter received on the roof top of the house of Simon the tanner. We are told in Acts 10:9 that Peter became very hungry and in a vision saw every type of moving thing lowered down from heaven in a sheet. Peter was instructed to kill and eat. Peter resisted this because he had been strictly obedient to the 'food rules' for Israel all his life.

It required the vision to be repeated three times – 'that which God has cleansed you must not call unclean.' Once we understand that 'house rules' change for different times we can see that the special rules which marked Israel out as different were not needed for this new current (gentile) age. In this vision given to Peter the food rules that applied before the Jewish age are being reinstated.

This has major impact on Peter who is then faced with spreading the gospel to the gentiles. Even the idea of such a thing would have been impossible before this vision.

To Peter, the fact that all animals can be cleansed by God, for food, means that the same God is able also to cleanse the gentiles.

Finally, in the book of Acts 15:20 we find some 'house rules' for the church:

*"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."* Acts 15:19-20

In Galatians chapter 2 we are told that the Apostle Peter ate with the gentiles – that is not surprising after his earlier vision on the roof of Simon the tanner's house!

### **Evidence for the concept of dispensations.**

So we have given the clear evidence that there were different 'house rules' for diet for different periods of man's sojourn on earth. We must go on to see if in history we can identify any such periods of time.

Further proof for the concept, if it is needed, is found in Ephesians:

*'In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him.'*

Chapter 1:7-10

*'For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles -- if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,'*

Chapter 3:1-2

So we will conclude that the concept of different house rules for different periods of time has been effectively demonstrated and go on to see how to rightly divide the word.

I am aware that there are some commentators who would not agree about 'dispensations' – but their argument is not with me but with the scripture, which is abundantly clear as outlined above. I am not aware of any biblical argument for dismissing dispensations as being instructive for this age.

## **Chapter 2      An overview of the dispensations of the Kingdom of God**

The history of mankind, so far as it is recorded in the bible, can be split into easily definable sections. Broadly, those sections would look like this:

### ***A      In the Garden of Eden.***

Work is pleasure. God fellowships with man. There is no sin. Until.....

### ***B      The period up to the calling of Abraham.***

There is no law. Man becomes increasingly sinful. The flood is God's judgement. Man becomes carnivorous. God prepares to call a 'special' people for Himself.

I am going to refer to this period as the 'Age of conscience.'

### ***C      From Abraham to Jesus.***

Abraham is called and Israel is established as God's special people. Extensive rules to mark Israel as different from other nations. Jesus comes as Messiah of the Jews and is rejected by His own.

We will call this period of time 'The age of Israel,'

### ***D      From Jesus right up to the current time and until the end of the age.***

The gentiles are brought into the purposes of God. Massive evangelism throughout the world.

We will call this period 'The age of the Gentiles.'

### ***E      Jesus return to rule personally from Jerusalem.***

Jesus returns to rule.

(The church – that is those who have put their trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sin and for eternal life during the age of the Gentiles – are called to eagerly desire His appearing.)

We will call this period 'The personal rule of Jesus Christ.'

### ***F      Eternity.***

The period referred to after the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 when earth and heaven have passed away and a new heaven and earth have appeared.

## **More dispensations?**

I am aware that some of those who make a detailed study of this subject would account for more dispensations. However, the objective of our study is, 'rightly dividing the word of truth.' In the context of practical application for daily living there is little profit from further sub division of dispensations.

In the next chapters we will seek to understand each dispensation. The objective is so that at the end of our study we will be equipped to understand which scripture applies to us, as His church, and which does not.

### **Chapter 3    The time from creation to Abraham**

In this chapter we take in the period of creation, the time in the garden of Eden and the 'Age of Conscience,' as we have called it.

#### **Creation week**

The book of Genesis records that the creation process took 6 days followed by a day of rest. For the purposes of our study there is no need to question or to examine the many controversies that surround this statement.

In the appendix we show that Peter and early church writers saw the 7 days of creation as a 'type' representing 7,000 years of existence for mankind. The book of Revelation makes mention of a 1,000 year period when Jesus comes to earth with His bride and Satan is bound . (Chapters 19 and 20).

So this proposition gets some biblical support. Does it get historical support?

#### **The Garden of Eden.**

Genesis, chapters one and two, see man in the garden with dominion over the earth.

The Lord God has made man in His image and now fellowships with man. There is no sin. God's purpose for man is described in His command to Adam and Eve:

*'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves over the earth.'*  
Genesis 1:28

Now God is expecting man to rule the earth in perfection. There is only one detailed 'house rule' in this 'dispensation.' God gives man a vegetarian diet and says - *'of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'*

Genesis 2:17

## **After sin enters**

We are familiar with the story – the way Satan tempted Eve, she gave in to the temptation and induced Adam to follow suit.

The judgement of God involves man being removed from the Garden of Eden and there are significant changes. The ‘house rules’ which cover the attributes of the earth and the activity of man change dramatically. Now work will be by the sweat of the brow for the ground is cursed. There will be sorrow, and pain in childbirth.

The idyllic Garden of Eden is no longer man’s home. Man’s sin has consequences, he must face a new set of ‘house rules.’

## **The Age of conscience**

The bible records for us that the entry of sin has increasing effect. Cain kills his brother Abel after which sin increases so much that by the time we reach Genesis 6 this is what we find:

*‘Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. Genesis 6:5-6*

Mankind has been utterly unable to be good and has become entirely wicked except for Noah. It is a sobering thought – if it were not for Noah there would be no human race!

## **Footnote:**

### **Pre flood and post flood**

This dispensation can be subdivided into before and after the flood. There is a significant change in diet immediately after the flood.

The Law has not yet been introduced.

The objective that man should worship God and come to redemption of both himself and the earth has not changed, neither has the character of God. It is the 'modus operandi' for man on earth that changes with dispensations

## **Chapter 4 The age of Israel**

### **A major change of dispensation**

The Lord God decides to call out a people who are to be His special people. He starts with Abraham by calling him to leave his own country and to go to a place that He will show him.

Abraham is obedient to the instruction and call of God.

As time goes on Abraham's descendants grow in number just as God promised. They end up in captivity in Egypt. God delivers them through Moses.

Now the Lord God gives to these special people a set of instructions which are generally referred to as 'The Law.' However, this title is misleading. God's special people were called as a special nation and named Israel. This special nation was marked out as different by the laws it applied.

Jews refer to the first five books of the bible as 'The Torah' or 'law.'

(Refer to 'Israel – present and future' for more detail of Israel's calling as a nation.)

### **Law is a major change of modus operandi or 'house rules.'**

The introduction of the law brought major changes to the way in which Israel lived.

Before the introduction of the law Moses would have been free to eat pork just like Abraham his ancestor. After the introduction of the law there were strict 'food' laws and many other rules and obligations covering many aspects of life.

The Lord God laid down very specific rules for priesthood and for worship. Israel was to stand out as different from all the peoples around her. This was the point – Israel was to be different because they represented God's special choice. Israel was a witness to God on the earth.

## **Transition**

The change of dispensation required a transition from one set of 'house rules' to another. We can see this process taking place in that the sign of circumcision starts with Abraham well before the Law is actually given through Moses.

However, even though circumcision was instituted before the Law, the Apostle Paul is clear that those now looking to circumcision are bound to keep the whole Law.

(Refer to 1 Corinthians 7:19, Galatians 5:6 and 6:15 In Galatians 5:2 Paul warns that if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing.)

## **The Messiah comes for His own**

Jesus came for the lost sheep of Israel.

Matthew 15:24:

*'But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

Jesus came for the Jews. He was a Jew and He came as King of the Jews. When He sent out His disciples on mission, He sent them to the Jews.

Matthew 10:5-8

*'These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.*

*"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

*"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*

*"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'*

It is very clear that the initial thrust of Jesus ministry was to the people of Israel. He came as their King and as a nation they did not accept Him.

## **The close of the dispensation**

The rejection of Jesus by the Jews (refer to 'Israel – present and future' for detailed study) meant that the Lord had to work out the ongoing plan of redemption another way. This was not a surprise to God who knows the end from the beginning. The rejection by Israel opened the way for a work of God among the Gentiles, as recorded by Paul:

*'I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.*

*Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!*

*For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?'*

Romans 11:11-15

In this chapter of Romans Paul also tells us that the Jews were 'cut off' from the olive tree – that represents the flow of the goodness of God. This cutting of refers to Israel as a nation – any individual Jew can still find salvation through Jesus Christ. The gentile nations are now grafted into that root – that is the root of the flow of the blessing of God.

So a new dispensation was opened. A dispensation called the 'dispensation of grace' by Paul in Ephesians 3:2. There was going to be another change of 'house rules.'

### **House rules are different for different times.**

The point of our discussion is to ascertain that there are different requirements for different dispensations or periods of time. Then we will be able to rightly divide what applies to us from what applied only in other dispensations. This then equips us for a fruitful Christian life.

## **Chapter 5**

### **This present age.**

With the cutting off of Israel and the grafting in of the gentile nations we have another major change of dispensation

- The Jews could hardly believe it – the gentiles were now to be included in God’s purposes.
- The Gentiles were confused – do we have to keep the law.
- The converted Jews were confused also – and many became zealous for the law.

### **The most important aspect of the new dispensation**

If we were to go straight to the main point it would be this – In this dispensation the Holy Spirit is given to man to indwell him. (Man becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is the result believing in the effective sacrifice of Jesus as a substitute, to pay the penalty of one’s sin, by His death on the cross in our place.)

We are told in John 7:39 that the Spirit was not given to man until after Jesus was glorified. Therefore we understand that in the previous dispensations the Spirit would come upon a man or woman for a purpose or for an office, but would not dwell within him or her.

We are told in John 20:22 that Jesus breathed on them and commanded: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ This was the first impartation of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Later, in Acts 2 we are told of the filling of the Holy Spirit as His followers waited in Jerusalem. In Acts 4 we are told of another filling of the Spirit after they have been forbidden from preaching in the name of Jesus. So in this age believers are indwelt by, and filled with, the Holy Spirit.

This fulfils Jesus statement, *‘But you know Him, He (the Holy Spirit) dwells with you and will be in you.’* John 14:17

## **For the first time man is given authority over the works of satan.**

With the indwelling Holy Spirit came the authority over all the works of satan. Earlier Jesus had granted this authority to some of the disciples. Now the believers had a specific objective:

*'To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,*

***according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,***

*in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.'*

Ephesians 3:8-12

There are two things to point out from this passage:

- Firstly:

One of the purposes of believers (now known as the church) is to demonstrate to the principalities and powers that they are not the rulers and owners of planet earth.

- Secondly:

That this accords with the original plan of redemption, where man is told to take dominion over all the earth - now to include the works of satan. – i.e. this is God's eternal purpose. God is working a plan of redemption.

### **Appropriated by faith**

In the very same way that Abraham entered into the purposes of God by believing and trusting in His promise by faith, so we enter into the purposes of God by believing and trusting in Jesus for our salvation.

As we do that we are born again, we become new creatures in Christ, neither Jew nor Greek, but a new creation. (Galatians 3:28 and 6:15)

## **The nature of this dispensation**

It is vital that we grasp the nature of this new dispensation. Had the Jews accepted Jesus as Messiah when He came, then His physical rule on earth would have started. They rejected Him. Another plan came into being – the Kingdom would start, but as a ‘mystery kingdom\*,’ a spiritual kingdom.

(\*mystery = not previously revealed - Romans 16:25)

That is why Paul says there is neither male nor female – in the physical kingdom male and female clearly still exist – but this is a spiritual kingdom in which the flesh profits nothing (Romans 8). In this spiritual kingdom there is neither male nor female - we are all sons of God.

In this dispensation there is neither Jew nor Greek. Clearly in the physical kingdom of the world there are still Jew and Greek. But in this spiritual kingdom there is no division - the dividing wall has been removed in Christ (Ephesians 2:14). Every one who comes to personal belief in Jesus Christ becomes a member of the worldwide church.

## **Confusion reigned in the early church.**

This change of dispensation was dramatic and it took some time for the church to settle into the doctrine appropriate to the new period of time. In particular the many converted Jews in Jerusalem became zealous for the Law. Here is the scripture record:

*‘On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.*

*When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*

*And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;’      Acts 21:18-20*

Sometimes we don’t appreciate that there were tens of thousands of Jews converted to Christianity in the early church. But they were not understanding that the dispensation had changed to one of grace – rather

they were zealous for the law – something had to change and indeed the early church was scattered throughout the world.

In Galatians 2:11-21 we read Paul's account of a clash with Peter. Peter had seen and understood the new dispensation even to the point of eating with the Gentile converts. (This would have been totally unacceptable to a Jew. Peter was clearly very worried about the reaction of the Jewish believers coming from James – this demonstrates again that the change of dispensation was not widely understood at that time.)

You will remember that the Lord had used a dramatic vision to demonstrate to Peter that the Gentiles were able to come into His purposes.

Acts 10:9-16 has details of the vision. Here a sheet is lowered with every kind of animal and creeping thing with instructions to kill and eat. This was definitely not allowed under Jewish law – but the whole point is that a new dispensation is starting – the Jewish law is fulfilled.

Peter learns two things through his vision – he can change his diet and the Gentiles can be cleansed by God. After all if God can cleanse all food, He can also cleanse all people.

(Some are teaching that the vision has nothing to do with diet at all, and that its only function was to get Peter ready to accept that gentiles were to be included in the church. These same people tend to teach that the dietary rules are still in place. However, the logic of that position is unsustainable. That logic says God has not cleansed all foods so therefore He has cleansed the gentiles. Whereas the obvious and clear logic is that God has cleansed all food and therefore He can cleanse the gentiles also.)

### **Paul given the house rules for the new dispensation**

It is to Paul that the Lord gave by revelation the full understanding of this new dispensation.

So we find Paul arguing strenuously for the grace that is now the underlying principle for the times. The letters to the Romans and to the Galatians in particular carry the arguments about the law and freedom therefrom.

The writer to the Hebrews also takes up the same message.

The law was a tutor leading Israel to Christ. Once they received Christ, the Law had fulfilled its task and had no further effect over us. We are not

bound by Law – rather with the indwelling Holy Spirit we have been given a new heart and a new spirit.

Another way of describing the law would be to liken it to a map. The map guides you to your destination. Once you have arrived the map has fulfilled its purpose and it no longer has any function. The map still exists – it has not been changed and it will still guide others – but for you it has no further function.

### **Hebrew and Greek**

We all know that the Old Testament is predominantly written in Hebrew whilst the New is in Greek. Some theorise that the New was ‘originally’ written in Hebrew and translated into Greek later. (There is evidence that the Gospel of Matthew, and only the Gospel of Matthew was first written in Hebrew) However, with dispensational recognition it becomes very clear that whilst Hebrew is appropriate for the Old Testament, it is not appropriate for the New.

The New Testament is written in the ‘Age of the Gentiles,’ when Israel is cut off, therefore it is appropriate for it to be written in a gentile language – Greek. On the other hand, the Old Testament was written during the ‘Age of Israel’ and clearly for that dispensation Hebrew is appropriate.

There is much to be learnt from the Old Covenant and from Hebrew ‘ways.’ However, great care is needed as we come under a different covenant – the New Covenant. Not everything Hebrew is helpful – it did not help Israel who rejected the Messiah!

The promise of Christ’s physical return still remains which leads us to another dispensation.....

## Chapter 6

### The millennial rule of Jesus Christ

It is not my purpose here to go into the various doctrines which surround the events that close this age. I have dealt with an outline of the future in my booklet 'Explaining the Future' and with the question of the rapture of the church in 'Will the church be caught away.' In addition to that I have dealt with the specific future expectations of Israel in 'Israel – present and future.' Nor will we go into length about the nature of this millennial kingdom.

The purpose of this short chapter is simply to draw our attention to another change of dispensation. The house rules will change again when Jesus returns.

Revelation 19 and 20 leads us to realise that Jesus will return to earth to establish His physical Kingdom. There are many promises of a very fruitful time to come to be found in the Old Testament. These promises are as yet unfulfilled.

For example:

*'There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

*His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.*

*"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.'*

Isaiah 11:1-9

The main features of the millennial kingdom will include:

- Jesus ruling personally from Jerusalem
- The bride of Christ ruling with Him.
- Israel chief nation
- No anti-Semitism
- Transformed animal kingdom (see above scripture)
- Mankind in proper dominion over the earth – this has been God's eternal plan.
- The end of war.
- Israel's borders will be expanded
- The Temple in Jerusalem will be the centre of worship with annual feasts and animal sacrifice restored.
- ... and other things.

We are proving the point that there are different 'house rules' for different periods so that we might study and discover what we are expected to do in this age in which we live. Without this clarity we could end up leading lives which are less fruitful than they could be. Indeed Paul warned Timothy that failing to rightly divide the truth would lead to shame.

**Chapter 7**  
**Should Christians keep the law?**

# No!

Paul is absolutely emphatic:

Galatians 1:6

*'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,'*

Galatians 3:1-3

*'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'*

Galatians 3:10-11

*'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

Galatians 4:9

*'But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?'*

Galatians 5:1

*'Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.'*

Galatians 5:18

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

The whole book of Hebrews is about the superiority of, and the need for a New Covenant.

# Why not:

Because trying to be justified, in any area of our lives, by the keeping of the law is a work of the flesh. This is justification by our own effort in keeping the law.

*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?* Galatians 3:3

Romans 8:3-4

*'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'*

# But...

When Jesus taught the 'Sermon on the Mount' He made it very clear that the standard applied in the Law was now replaced by a much higher standard.

For example:

*"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'*

*"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Matthew 5:27-28*

This statement gives us the clue to what Jesus means. It is no longer a matter of keeping a strict code of conduct. Now it becomes a matter of what is happening in our hearts. For Jesus said the one who lusts after a woman, even without the physical act, has already transgressed in his heart.

## **This is not an easy alternative**

*'For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.'*

*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."* Galatians 5:13-14

I want to be absolutely clear that I am not promoting unholy behaviour. Quite the contrary. The new level of 'requirement' is far higher than that set by the Law. However the Law could not bring justification to anyone – that was not its purpose. The purpose of the Law was so that the Jews would realise they needed a Saviour who would wash away their sin – for they could not keep even the standard set the Law. (refer Galatians 3:19-25)

### **Unachievable holiness**

Our goal is just that – unachievable holiness. That is unachievable for any human flesh. Paul wrote about this in Romans 7.

The good news is that even though the standard is unachievable for us our salvation does not depend upon our achieving the standard. Salvation is by grace and not by works lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:9)

So does God want us to live holy lives or not? Emphatically yes.

### **The process of achieving through the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the one with the ministry of changing us from one degree of glory to another. (2 Corinthians 3:18) As we co-operate with Him, by repenting of wrong doing and attitudes, and by asking to be changed on the inside, and by agreeing with His work within us – so we become increasingly holy in our actions.

This co-operation is best advanced by being full of the presence of the Holy Spirit. That means welcoming Him within you – it means a love relationship with Him.

Then we will become more and more holy in our ways.

Holy Spirit please fill me with more and more love for Jesus.

## **Righteousness a gift – holiness a process**

We could look at it like this. The righteousness of God was given to us, although we did not deserve it, as a gift. (Romans 5:17) That is by unmerited favour, or grace.

*'By grace you have been saved.'* Ephesians 2:5

Righteousness means 'right standing.' So through grace we have been brought into right standing with God. That does not mean all our actions are perfect. We still sin.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. We repent and are restored by being cleansed from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Holiness, on the other hand, conveys in our thinking the nature of our current actions. *'Be holy for I am holy'* 1 Peter 1:16 No one can be holy 100% of the time. Hence the need for us to be forgiven for present and future sin. Yet, increasingly, we should become more and more holy in our ways.

Amazingly John states that he who is born of God cannot sin – 1 John 3:9. This must be a reference to our born again spirit as in our flesh and mind we can sin. This is why our salvation is utterly secure!

## **Walk in the Spirit**

Paul urges us to 'walk in the Spirit.' This, he says, is the way to avoid indulging the flesh. By the Spirit put to death the deeds of the flesh. (from Romans 8)

To walk in the Spirit is to walk as Jesus walked - in continual contact with His Father through the Spirit. We are urged to keep in continual contact with Jesus through the same Spirit.

- You have been made righteous – put in right standing with God
- Become holy
- Do not place your reliance on keeping law or rules
- Keep short accounts with the Lord – repent of wrongdoing quickly

## **Chapter 8**

### **Practical Application**

This chapter is split into three main sections:

- Walking in the Spirit
- Fulfilling the 'Great Commission.'
- Demonstrating the wisdom of God to principalities and powers.

They are not intended to be in order of importance.

#### **1) Walking in the Spirit**

The only way I know to walk in the Spirit is to increasingly enjoy a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Obviously that does not come 'naturally' as we are told that the flesh lusts against (or wars with) the Spirit.  
(Galatians 5:17)

Paul tells us that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another and urges us to walk in the Spirit so that we do not fulfil the lust of the flesh.  
(Galatians 5:1)

Practical application – we are not here on earth to indulge the strong desires of the flesh. That is the desires of our bodies, minds, emotions and wills are not to rule over us – no, they are to be brought into obedience to Christ.

We are actually free to do whatever we wish – we have been set free from the law – this is glorious liberty. But Paul warns us:

- a) Sin leads to death. If we continue in sin our mortal bodies will suffer the consequences. Romans 6:23
- b) If we live according to the flesh we will die. Romans 8:13
- c) Not everything is helpful:

*'All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.'*  
1 Corinthians 10:23-24

*'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Foods for*

*the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.* 1 Corinthians 6:12-13

*'But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.'*  
1 Corinthians 6:17

O wretched man that I am, I can never attain this. Who will deliver me!  
Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ. (From Romans 7:25)

### **We have extraordinary free will**

The above scriptures show that God has given us extraordinary free will on this earth. It is up to us to use that free will for blessing and not for evil. He has given us the Holy Spirit to change us from one degree of glory to another. In our free will we can co-operate with the process.

### **The flesh prefers rules**

However, one of the realities of human life, is that our flesh frequently prefers to operate to some sort of rule, rather than enjoy fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We have to keep asking to be filled with love for the Lord to overcome this.

Because our flesh likes to keep 'rules' it tells us that we must keep certain rules to please God.

In Paul's day this was expressed by many teaching the need for circumcision. Indeed many Christians (converted Jews in the early church) were demanding that new converts were circumcised, including gentile converts.

Paul was very very strong about this. No form of rule keeping will save anyone.

If you want to see just how strong Paul was about this read Galatians 5:7-15. Here Paul wishes that those who preach circumcision would not just cut off their own foreskins but the whole appendage! (verse 12) This is very strong stuff!

### **Have we fallen into rule keeping**

We could look at our own Christian life and see if we have taken on any 'rules.'

For instance do we say to ourselves and to new believers, 'You must have a quiet time every day,' 'you must read your bible every day.'

They sound good – but actually unless you are relating to the Lord, hearing His voice, knowing that you are in touch with Him, those activities in themselves can be fruitless.

Sometimes we will understand, from the Lord, to do something and then turn one specific instruction from God into a new rule or law, great care is needed. Let us also beware of putting others under rules or laws – every one is to bear their own load. (Galatians 6:5)

### **What about our resources?**

Are we 'obeying' some rule or have we genuinely generous hearts such that we freely give. (My understanding in this area is recorded in 'What shall we do with money.')

Here it is enough to say that generosity, not rule keeping, is the vital ingredient of this dispensation. The way we sow is the way we will reap.

***God loves a generous / hilarious giver and our generosity provides a platform from which the Lord can work out the blessings He has prepared for us in this life.***

### **Do we think one day is more important than other ?**

Sunday for example? Surely Sunday is special? Isn't it?

Certainly, the ongoing principle of a day of rest, carries right through from Genesis chapter one, and clearly that is right.

However Paul urges us not to take special note of a particular day. Indeed many people have to work on Sunday's, by necessity their day of rest must be different.

*'So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.'*  
Colossians 2:16-17

It is not the day of the week that is important – though there are obvious benefits from Christians meeting together to worship and fellowship and

having Sunday as common to most is an advantage. Again we must be careful not to introduce that as a law – it is not. The blessings of God are new every morning.

### **Do we think some occupations are spiritual whilst others are secular?**

Surely being a Pastor is far more important than being a businessman for example? No! This is reverting again to matters specific to the Jewish age – for now the bible clearly states that we are all priests unto God. (1 Peter 2:5,9) We are all called to do our work as unto the Lord. (Colossians 3:23) The Lord has prepared particular ‘good works’ for us to walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). The important thing is being obedient to the calling of God for each of us – be it to ‘ministry’ or whatever.

It is just as important for a ‘layman’ to do his work, as unto the Lord and in the power of the Spirit, as it is for a ‘spiritual’ occupation.

God poured anointing on the craftsmen who were building the Tabernacle in the Old Testament – because He was going to put His presence there. (Exodus 31) Today His presence dwells in each believer – therefore we can expect His anointing for the work we are doing as well as all aspects of life.

***This is vitally important for you and me in this dispensation - God loves you doing what He has called you to do. Do it with all your might and expect His presence and anointing to be there. In this is fruitfulness.***

### **Works of the Law are under the curse.**

I have illustrated some areas where we might have slipped into wrong thinking for this dispensation. Each of us can ask the Lord to reveal any areas which we need to be changed for ourselves.

Paul underlines the fact that works of the Law are under the curse. Therefore keeping the Law is totally counterproductive. (Galatians 3:10) No wonder he was so strong with the Galatians!

What are you doing that is really keeping Old Testament Law?  
What are you teaching others that is really keeping Old Testament Law?

You will know that you are walking in the Spirit when your life is absolutely filled with:

- Love for the Lord – that is for God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And

- Love for the brethren

And

- Love for your neighbour.

You will know that you are keeping law when you do things as a matter of compulsion rather than as a matter of love. When something is done as a matter of love it is easy to do. When you are truly in love with Jesus it becomes easier to deny the flesh. We need to ask for changed hearts!

As we ask the Holy Spirit to fill and fill us again with these qualities, He will walk with us closely.

### **Keep it in the right dispensation**

We will take a short look at a verse which is frequently taken out its right dispensation to demonstrate the dangers of so doing:

*'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.*

*"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the LORD of hosts;'*

Malachi 3:10-11

It is quite common to hear the 'command' to bring the tithes into the storehouse – meaning the local church from where, it is said, you are fed (spiritually).

Let us ask one or two questions to determine just where this scripture fits into our 'house rules.'

Who was Malachi?

To whom was he speaking?

When was he speaking?

Into which dispensation does that fit?

Malachi was a prophet sent to Israel by the Lord over 400 years BC. His message was to the Israelites who had fallen away from God. He very clearly fits into the age we call the 'Jewish Age.'

Does the message fit into the current dispensation? The argument regarding whether or the church should pay tithes is dealt with very fully in my booklet 'What should we do with money?' My purpose here is to see if there is any danger in adopting this verse into the current time period.

In verse 11 in this chapter of Malachi there is an unconditional promise that if the Jews paid their tithes God would rebuke the devourer on their behalf. In the current dispensation authority over the works of satan is given to the church, to be exercised by the church, and God gives no promise of protection in the way He did in the Old Testament.

Therefore there is danger in adopting this passage into the current dispensation (apart from the fact that we have no authority to adopt it.) The danger comes in relying on God to do something He has not promised to do – that is to rebuke the devourer. He wants us to rebuke the devourer as a part of the church's role in demonstrating His wisdom to principalities and powers as He leads us by His Spirit to do so.

In fact this is one of the major roles of the church – that is to demonstrate to principalities and powers the wisdom of God by taking authority over their schemes – and it is completely lost in this regard by adopting this passage into this dispensation.

## **2) Fulfilling the great commission**

In this dispensation we are expected by the Lord to fulfil the 'Great Commission.'

We usually turn to Mark or to Matthew for our understanding of what this means:

*'And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

*"He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it*

*will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Mark 16:15-18

*'And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Matthew 28:18-20

‘Preach the gospel (with signs following), and make disciples out of every nation’ – that is the ‘Great Commission.’ Actually it is what we call the ‘Great Commission.’ In reality it is Jesus instructions to His disciples to be applied after He had left. That is the instructions for this dispensation. (As there is no record of the disciples baptising in the way specified here, it is thought possible that this part of the instructions may apply in the coming period known as ‘The Tribulation.’

In the Gospel of Luke we find some more instructions that apply to the period when Jesus has left:

*'Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.*

*Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.*

*"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them,*

***'Do business till I come.'***

Luke 19:11-13

This parable is very clearly about Jesus going away to receive a Kingdom and return. Whilst He is gone, He wants His disciples to work with the resources He gives them, to create increase. He trusts His followers, but will require an account – and not just an account of 10% or 25% or 50% but of everything, 100%. In this dispensation we are likened to stewards looking after the assets of the Master.

So now we can put these instructions together :

***In the course of that which I have called you to do (your calling), preach the gospel, heal the sick and make disciples. This is really practical. In our day to day lives we are called to work out this commission. This is the meaning of being salt and light.***

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

*"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

*"Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5:13-16

### **3) Demonstrating the wisdom of God to principalities and powers**

We have already stated that the indwelling Spirit was not given to man until after Jesus was glorified. This is one of the most important differences in the 'house rules' for this dispensation. It is a wonderful thing but it brings with the responsibility of fulfilling God's purpose.

No one in the Old Testament is ever told to resist satan or given authority over his works.

In this dispensation the Lord wants us to fight and win the battle in the spiritual realm. That is why Paul says our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12.

(See 'Be strong in the battle' for detailed study.)

***By taking authority over the works of satan and his minions we are demonstrating to these evil powers that God is greater. This is a major part of the redemptive process that has been going on through every dispensation in different ways.***

Summary for this dispensation:

- Avoid doing things as matter of rule or law.
- Walk in the Spirit
- Love the Lord, your brethren and your neighbours.
- Be made generous.
- Fulfil the 'Great Commission.'
- Demonstrate God's wisdom to the principalities and powers the wisdom of God.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Other practical advice for understanding the scripture**

There are three basic matters I would like to draw your attention to:

- 1) The difference between ‘graphe,’ ‘logos’ and ‘rhema.’
- 2) The Jewish background to New Testament scripture.
- 3) The intensity of meaning of Greek and Hebrew words.
- 4) No contradiction – our understanding must include all the relevant scriptures.

#### **1) The difference between ‘graphe,’ ‘logos’ and ‘rhema.’**

‘Graphe’ is the Greek for writings and it means the scriptures.

‘Logos’ is Greek and is translated ‘word’ in English.

‘Rhema’ is Greek and is translated ‘word’ in English.

‘Logos’ is found many times in the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of John’s gospel where it is describing Jesus Himself. Jesus is described as the full revelation of God in bodily form. (Colossians 2:9) Therefore we can deduce that the full meaning of ‘logos’` is the full revelation of God including every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and chapter that makes up the whole.

‘Rhema’ on the other hand simply means little phrase or saying. The significance of ‘rhema’ is found in Matthew 4. Here when Jesus is tested by satan in the wilderness, He answers the challenge to turn stones into bread with the statement, ‘man does not live by bread alone but by every word (rhema) that proceeds from the mouth of God.’

Jesus was using scriptures that were quickened to Him by the Spirit to rebuff satan’s challenges. I.e. Jesus used a ‘rhema’ word. Because a ‘rhema’ word is that which is coming from the mouth of God NOW, it has all the power of heaven behind it.

In bible teaching it is important not to teach ‘rhema’ words given to you at a particular time as if they are the same as the foundational, never changing, ‘logos’ of God.

For example: when facing bankruptcy Marion (my wife) and I sought the Lord with a specific question. Should we sell our house to pay off debt?

The Lord answered by quickening a particular scripture from Jeremiah 42:10 – stay in the land. That personal advice was acted upon and we were duly delivered out of our problems. However it would be totally wrong of me to teach the next businessman in trouble to ‘stay in the land.’ Rather he must seek God for himself and get his personal instructions, which might be the same, or might be different.

We cannot teach ‘rhema’ words received as doctrine for other occasions or other people.

## **2) The Jewish background to New Testament scripture.**

We should realise that, in His earthly manifestation, Jesus was a Jew and that He came to the Jews. Therefore the context of what He was saying and teaching was in the cultural setting of Judaism.

On occasions it will help deepen our understanding as we see things in that light.

For example: Consider ‘communion’ in the light of the fact that it was celebrated on Passover.

Another example would be this parable:

Matthew 13:33

*‘Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."’*

Traditionally we interpret that the kingdom is like leaven and therefore the whole lump is made acceptable. However, when considered in its Jewish context the meaning becomes quite the opposite.

Bear in mind that the punctuation marks were put in afterwards and simply move the comma:

*‘Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like, leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."’*

So now we have the kingdom of heaven likened to three measures of meal which have had leaven added to them. We could rephrase it like this: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like three measures of meal into which a woman introduced leaven until all was leavened.’

Now the parable makes complete sense. Leaven to the Jew was representing sin. A woman added sin to the three measures of meal.

Clearly this could represent Eve, whereas in our traditional rendering ‘the woman’ made no sense at all.

The whole lump was leavened – that is became tainted with sin – hence the need for a Saviour. In our traditional rendering the whole lump was made acceptable – yet we know that is not the case as the earth is being prepared for judgement.

So our knowledge of Jewish background helps us to get the right interpretation of the parable and to see that the word leaven has a consistent meaning throughout scripture.

At the same time we need to bear in mind:

- 1) There has been a change of dispensation – so not everything ‘Jewish’ applies.
- 2) The early church, when it was made up mainly of Jews, struggled to adopt the new dispensation. The converted Jews became zealous for the law instead of enjoying God’s grace. We need to be very careful that we do not become zealous for the law or any part of it – for that is likely to be contradictory to the dispensation of grace.

### **3) The intensity of meaning of Greek and Hebrew words.**

It is well worth while obtaining a Greek / English and a Hebrew / English bible dictionary to obtain the full meaning of the underlying words.

For example:

We have already seen that ‘logos’ and ‘rhema’ have different meanings although in English they are both translated ‘word.’

‘Love’ is translated from both ‘agape’ and ‘phileo.’

‘Know’ is translated from both ‘oida’ and ‘ginosko.’

To understand these more fully we will have to look at a bible dictionary.

I use Bullingers and Vines bible dictionaries for Greek / English and

Wilson’s for Hebrew / English. There are many others available.

A final example:

In Luke 18 we get the parable of the persistent widow who, we are told, ‘wearies’ the unrighteous judge by her constant demands for justice.

The Greek word, ‘hupopiazō’ is found in one other place in the New Testament. This is where Paul says of his physical body that he ‘beats it

black and blue.’ How much more graphic is it when we consider that our words against the unrighteous judge ‘beat him black and blue.’

**4) No contradiction – our understanding must include all the relevant scriptures.**

Now it is time to ask ourselves a question concerning one of the disputed areas of doctrine – can you loose your salvation.

At first sight it should be straight forward - either you can or you cannot. Both positions cannot be true!

However, we must first understand what is meant by ‘soteria,’ the Greek word translated salvation. According to the Greek/English lexicons it means ‘deliverance from danger,’ and ‘preservation.’

Paul’s final word to the Thessalonians recorded in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - *‘Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’*

So now we can ascertain that we consist of three parts. (there are many other scriptures which refer to one or more part which confirms the fact. Here, in this verse, it is stated expressly.)

So let us now try to establish the answer to our question.

Eternal life is spiritual - (our natural bodies are changed in the twinkling of an eye into the same type of body as Jesus has after the resurrection.) Jesus said you must be born again, denying the concept of this being some earthly matter, expressly saying Spirit to spirit. John 3:1-7.

So, for the believer, the human spirit is born again when we place our trust in the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus goes on to say that the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us in John 14:17.

Paul makes the statement that the Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee. (Ephesians 1:13-14, 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 5:5)

John says, ‘whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.’ 1 John 3:9.

**Conclusion** - nothing can separate our born again, Spirit filled human spirit from our Lord. At the spiritual, eternal level we cannot lose our salvation.

[Any understanding based on other scriptures which are interpreted to say you can lose your eternal salvation stands in opposition to these scriptures and must therefore have an alternative interpretation. Indeed, when we look at such scriptures they say those who sin won't enter heaven, and go on to say so we were once like that, but we have been changed. i.e. whilst unbelievers are fundamentally sinful we are not because our sin has been removed and we have been given righteousness.]

**So now we will take a look at our body and soul and the risks they face.**

### **Quenching the Spirit**

*'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.'*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-21

In this short passage we have some of the things the Spirit will work within us - if we let Him.

We will be able to always rejoice - no matter what the circumstances and problems around us may be. It is very easy when there are problems to quench the Spirit by not rejoicing. God is good, He has not been changed by your circumstances. He will bring good out of the situation for you. Rejoice.

We quench the Spirit when we look at things through natural eyes - that is when we consider things with only our minds - we need to look beyond our own thoughts and abilities and resources - see what the Spirit is saying.

When we quench the Spirit we miss out on His blessings and our whole demeanour suffers.

## **Do not grieve the Spirit**

It is bad enough when we don't listen to the Lord speaking through the Holy Spirit - it is yet worse when we actively continue to live in sin.

Ephesians 4 sums it up like this:

- Do not lie, instead speak truth..
- Do not let the sun go down on your anger
- Do not give place to the devil
- Do not steal, work instead and give generously Do not let corrupt speech come from your mouth, rather edification that blesses the hearers.
- 'And do not grieve the Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.'

You have been sealed for the day of redemption - that is made fast by, made secure by the Spirit of God - i.e. He has come to live in you and will never leave you nor forsake you. But He can be grieved.

If we live a life of sin the Spirit will grieve. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit - that is why the scripture tells us,

*'Be holy for I am holy.'*

1 Peter 1:16

We quench and grieve the Spirit when we build up a hardness around our own spirit. We do this by ignoring Him and by living in sin. This is carnality.

Spirituality is letting the Spirit flow through into our soul and body, affecting our thinking and our behaviour.

The wages of sin is death and the more we grieve and quench the Spirit the more death will be able to work in our members. Eventually, if we just will not respond but insist in continuing in sinful ways we commit the 'sin unto death.' (1 John 5:16). Every unbeliever commits this sin of course because they blaspheme the Spirit. (That means they, in effect, call the Spirit a liar when He witnesses Christ to them. Whilst we can deny the Holy Spirit in our minds we cannot deny Him in our human spirit.)

**Conclusion** – in our flesh and blood we can lose the ‘deliverance from danger’ by quenching and grieving the Spirit leading to earlier death than would otherwise have been the case.

## Appendix

This appendix is arranged in parts to correspond with the chapters that have gone before and is intended to show how history, when considered in the context of redemption, confirms dispensations as being rightly dividing the scripture.

### Part one – to relate to chapter 2

**An overview of the dispensations of the Kingdom of God.**

**The complete chronology revealed.**

Over church history there have been many attempts to create an accurate chronology. Perhaps the best known is that of Bishop Usher. Now time has moved on and we have the benefit of the cumulative understanding of a number of scholars to whom the Lord has revealed critical elements of understanding.

We are indebted especially to the following:  
Sir Edward Denny for understanding Jubilee Cycles and unreckoned periods.

Dr Grattan Guinness for understanding the Times of the Gentiles.

A.E. Ware and his associates for understanding the full chronology and linking it to today's calendar.

Martin Thompson for perfecting the work that had gone before and writing complicated computer programs that enable the strenuous calculations needed in the study of chronology and calendars to be done with ease. Martin's work has put the chronological understanding onto a totally sound and verifiable footing.

Although biblical chronology is a complicated subject we can now be absolutely certain of a proven chronology. In this booklet we can only

give understanding in limited depth – so the following pages give a 'layman's introduction. However enough is given to show that chronology completely supports the notion of dispensations, and that is why it is recorded here. For the student interested in deeper study I refer you to:

'Miracle of time' by Frank Paine. Published by Shiloah Ministries, 11 Beasley Court, Chard, Somerset. TA20 1DX.

'The world in liquidation' by A.E. Ware and associates. Published by Simkin Marshall Ltd of 242, Marylebone Road, London N.W.1. (Not currently in print).

In the future Martin Thompson's work is expected to be available in book form together with the computer program for comparing dates in different calendars.

### **'One day is as a thousand years'**

The apostle Peter made this statement in his second letter:

*'But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'* 2 Peter 3:8

We can interpret this passage to mean that one day represents one thousand years or we can say it means that with God time has no meaning.

We will see that at least some early church writers took the former of these two views.

### **Early church writers.**

There was an expectation among some of the early church writers that time would total 7,000 years from creation to the beginning of eternity. To illustrate this fact a couple of quotations are cited here: The first is from 'The Epistle of Barnabas' and the second from Hippolytus.

*'Even in the beginning of creation He makes mention of the sabbath, and God made in six days the works of His hands and He finished them on the sixth day and He rested on the seventh day and sanctified it. Consider my children what that signifies, in 6,000 years the Lord will bring all things to an end. For with Him one day is as 1,000 years as Himself testifies saying "Behold this day shall be a thousand years" therefore children in 6 days, that is 6,000 years shall all things be accomplished.'*

*'6,000 years must needs be fulfilled that the sabbath may come, even the rest, that Holy day on which God rested from all His work. The sabbath then is a type and image of the future kingdom of the saints, when they will reign with Christ after His coming down from heaven as John declares it in the apocalypse.'*

We do not seek to consider these early church writings on the same level as scripture – but, at this stage, merely to show that some early church thought expected man to enjoy 7,000 years of existence on this earth.

### **Broad application**

If we are going to accept this proposal, for the moment, then we can broadly apply time like this:

1 <sup>st</sup> 2,000 years	The age of conscience
2 <sup>nd</sup> 2,000 years	The age of the Jews
3 <sup>rd</sup> 2,000 years	The age of the Gentiles
1,000 years thereafter	The Millennial rule of Jesus

### **Introducing the chronology of redemption**

We can see in the scripture a work of God in redemption, both of people and of the earth.

This process of redemption starts in Genesis chapter 1 verse 2. The earth is found without form, void and darkness covered face of the deep. Then God starts a creative (or recreative) process.

In Noah we see a redemptive process at work.

In the Jews we see all sorts of things pointing to redemption in one way or another.

In the Gentile age we have Jesus Christ as the redeemer of all who believe in Him.

All this emphasis on redemption led to the concept that there would be a chronology of redemption. In the next chapters we are going to see just how that chronology unfolds.

Before we see the detailed application of the chronology of redemption we need to understand its unique features.

A chronology is a method of arranging dates and times. The chronology of redemption is a method that God has used to calculate time in relation to His dealings with mankind. Here are its unique features:

### **Jubilee cycles**

Sir Edward Denny took note of the answer Jesus gave to Peter regarding the number of times one should forgive one's brother. Here, in Matthew 18:22, Jesus says  $70 \times 7$ , that is 490. This led Sir Edward to think that a 490 year period might have special significance. His study led him to Leviticus 25:8-9 where the rules for Jubilee are found.

Sir Edward discovered that the jubilee started half way through the 49<sup>th</sup> year and ended half way through the 1<sup>st</sup> year of the next cycle. In other words the 50<sup>th</sup> year of jubilee did not exist as a separate year – it was an overlap year.

In the wisdom of God and in the chronology of redemption man actually lives for 49 years whilst God counts 50 years, the 50<sup>th</sup> being the year of jubilee.

### **Unreckoned periods**

It also became apparent to him that because this was a chronology of redemption, God did not account for years when His people were under the rule of foreign Kings or acting outside of the redemption concept. Where these arise they will be referred to in the notes that follow each chapter.

### **Different calendars.**

A calendar is a system by which a year is calculated. In past history there have been different calendars operated from time to time.

Basically the chronology of redemption is accounted for on the basis of years of 354 days in length. However, at the Exodus God introduced feasts for Israel which depended on agriculture. A 354 day year was inappropriate for this period so a luni-solar calendar was introduced instead.

Part two to relate to Chapter 3	The age of conscience.
---------------------------------	------------------------

Each period should represent 2,000 years in redemption chronology if our supposition that one day equals 1,000 years is to be accepted. We can calculate this period from the information given in scripture as follows:

Event:	Years Elapsed:	Scripture Reference:
Age of Adam at birth of Seth	130	Gen 5:3
Enos born when Seth is 105	235	Gen 5:6
Cainan born when Enos is 90	325	Gen 5:9
Mahalaaleel born when Cainan is 70	395	Gen 5:12
Jared born when Mahalaaleel is 65	460	Gen 5:15
Enoch born when Jared is 162	622	Gen 5:18
Methuselah born when Enoch is 65	687	Gen 5:21
Lamech born when Methuselah is 187	874	Gen 5:25
Noah born when Lamech is 182	1056	Gen 5:28
Shem born when Noah is 502	1558	Gen 11:10
The flood	1656	Gen 7:11
Arphaxed born when Shem is 100	1658	Gen 11:10
Salah born when Arphaxad is 35	1693	Gen 11:12
Eber born when Salah is 30	1723	Gen 11:14
Peleg born when Eber is 34	1757	Gen 11:16
Reu born when Peleg is 30	1787	Gen 11:18
Serug born when Reu is 32	1819	Gen 11:20
Nahor born when Serug is 30	1849	Gen 11:22
Terah born when Nahor is 29	1878	Gen 11:32
Abraham born when Terah is 130	2008	Gen 11:32
Deduct an unreckoned period from The death of Abel to the birth of Seth	-48	
	1960	
Add 40 jubilee years	40.	
	2000	

Here we have the first 'grand cycle' of 2,000 years in the chronology of redemption. We have called this period the 'age of conscience.'

Part three to relate to Chapter 4	The age of Israel
-----------------------------------	-------------------

The chronological 'proof' for this period is quite complex. In order to make it easy to follow it is split into 4 parts.

*A From Abraham to the Exodus - 500 years*

Event:	Years Elapsed:	Scripture Reference:
Abram born	2008	
Abram leaves Haran	2083	Gen 12:1-4
Abram 'marries' Hagar	2093	Gen 16:3
Ishmael born	2094	Gen 16:16
Isaac born	2108	Gen 21:5
Isaac weaned / Ishmael cast out 14	2113	Gen 21:8 and 14
Sarah's death at 127	2145	Gen 23:1
Isaac marries at 40	2148	Gen 25:20
Birth of Esau and Jacob, Isaac 60	2168	Gen 25:26
Jacob (130) and sons enter Egypt	2298	Gen 47:9
Exodus	2513	Ex 12:41
Years elapsed	505	
Deduct unreckoned period when Abraham goes into Hagar until Isaac Is born	- 15	
Total years	490	
Add jubilees	10	
<b>Redemption chronology years</b>	<b>500</b>	

## *B – Exodus to Solomon’s Temple – 500 years*

During this period Israel were ruled by judges. When they were disobedient to God they fell under the rulership of foreign kings.

Ruler:	Years Counted:	Foreign King – years not counted:
Exodus to start of Judges	47	
Joshua and others	20	Josh 14:6-10
Mesopotamia		8 Judges 3:8
Othniel	40	Judges 3:11
Moab		18 Judges 3:14
Ehud and Shagar	80	Judges 3:30
Canaanites		20 Judges 4:3
Deborah and Barak	40	Judges 5:31
Midian		7 Judges 6:1
Gideon	40	Judges 8:28
Abimelech	3	Judges 9:22
Tolah	23	Judges 10:2
Jair	22	Judges 10:3
Philistines and Ammonites		18 Judges 10:8
Jephthah	6	Judges 12:7
Ibzan	7	Judges 12:9
Elon	10	Judges 12:11
Abdon	8	Judges 12:14
Philistines		40 Judges 13:1
Eli	40	1 Sam 4:18
Philistines		20 1 Sam 7:2-3 and Acts 13:19-20
Samuel (part)	10	1 Sam 7:11-13
Saul	40	Acts 13:21
David	40	1 Kings 2:11

Solomon to the dedication Of the temple	14	
Total years	490	131
Add jubilee years	10	
<b>Redemption years</b>	<b>500</b>	

The years when Israel is ruled by foreigners are not reckoned in the Chronology of redemption as they represent periods of judgement.

***C - Solomon's temple to Nehemiah - 500 years***

Ruler: Foreign

Reference:

	Years Counted:	King – years not counted:
Solomon – rest of reign	26	1 Kings 11:42
Rehoboam	17	2 Chron 12:13
Abijah	3	2 Chron 13:2
Asa	41	2 Chron 16:13
Jehosaphat	22**	2 Chron 20:31
Jehoram *	4*	2 Kings 8:16-17
Ahaziah	1	2 Chron 22:2
Athaliah	6	2 Chron 22:12
Jehoash	40	2 Chron 24:1
Amaziah	29	2 Chron 25:1
Interregnum	12	2 Kings 14:17 – 15:1
Uzziah	52	2 Chron 26:3
Jotham	20	2 Kings 15:30-3
Ahaz	16	2 Chron 28:1
Hezekiah	29	Ezra 4:4-5
Manasseh	55	2 Chron 29:1
Amon	2	2 Chron 33:1

Josiah	31		2 Chron 33:21
Jehohoiakim	4	8	Jer 25:1 and 11
Jehohoachin		1	2 Chron 36:9
Jerusalem beseiged		9	2 Kings 25;1
Fall of Jerusalem		2	Jer 52:5 and 12
The decree to rebuild		50	Ezra 1:1
Interval to return of Nehemiah to rebuild	78		Neh 2:1-8
 Total years	 490	 70	
 Add jubilee years	 10		
<b>Redemption years</b>	<b>500</b>		

\* Jehoram was joint King for 4 years hence the scripture allocates 8 years.

\*\* Jehosophat rules jointly with Asa hence scripture has 25 years.  
The years when Israel is ruled by foreigners are not reckoned in the Chronology of redemption as they represent periods of judgement.

#### *D – Nehemiah to Death of Jesus Christ*

This is the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24. That is	490 years
Add jubilees	10
<b>Total redemption chronology years</b>	<b>500</b>

## Summary

Here are the four periods in summary:

- |    |                              |           |
|----|------------------------------|-----------|
| a) | Abraham to the Exodus        | 500 years |
| b) | Exodus to Solomon's temple   | 500 years |
| c) | Solomon's temple to Nehemiah | 500 years |
| d) | Nehemiah to Jesus            | 500 years |

Total		2000 years
-------	--	------------

## The period is complete

We have four periods each of 500 years so our 2,000 years of redemption are complete

## Part four – to relate to chapter five – this present age

We have more chronological knowledge now than at any time. The receipt of that knowledge has given us understanding of how God has counted time over the last 6,000 years with accuracy to the day and hour.

In 1932 A.E. Ware and his associates were studying chronology and the significance of the times. Ware had spotted that the first world war ended at 11am of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month in 1918 and asked the Lord if this was significant. He felt that the Lord indicated that the world had entered the 11<sup>th</sup> hour – hence the increasing interest in chronology.

In 1932 this group felt that the Lord was indicating that this last hour would end on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933. Not knowing exactly how to interpret this and wanting to 'sound the trumpet' the group widely publicised the 'rapture of the church' as coming on this day.

Afterwards the group received a tremendous amount of revelation about the times. This can be found in 'The world in liquidation' and in 'The Miracle of time,' by A.E. Ware and Frank Paine respectively.

The group were able to trace exactly the 6,000 years of redemption chronology. This chronology we have studied in outline. If you remember in redemption chronology there are a number of unusual factors:

God counts 50 years whilst man actually lives out 49. – Jubilee cycles.

A year is 354 days long except in the period from the Exodus to Jesus.

– Bible years.

Some periods of time are not counted at all. – Unreckoned periods.

To our amazement we find that history splits exactly into three lots of 2,000 redemption years each.

Ware and his associates unravelled this and calculated the 'current period,' adjusted for jubilees and for a 354 day year basis. The result was that the 2,000 redemption years ended on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933!

Further detailed study came up with a truly amazing 'coincidence' – 6,000 solar years (Julian years of 365.25 days each) ended on exactly the same day! This extremely complicated design could only be God Himself.

At the same time the group understood by revelation that the event on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933 (which clearly was not the rapture – that much was obvious as it had not happened) was the cutting off of the gentile nations from the fatness of the Olive Tree as mentioned by Paul in Romans 11: 22.

So what did happen on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933.

The world was in the grip of economic depression and the world leaders gathered together for a 'World Economic Conference' held in London. 66 nations of the world were represented. This was a wonderful opportunity for the gentiles to call upon the living God to help in this time of need. However there was no mention of turning to God at all and the conference ended concluding that it was not beyond the wit of man to solve the crisis.

In the spirit the gentile nations were cut off from the 'fatness' of the Olive Tree of God's blessing. (Individual Jews and individual gentiles have been saved at any time when they place their personal faith in Jesus Christ. Chronology here is dealing with nations rather than individuals.

As if to give immensely graphic confirmation of this God revealed another chronological confirmation.

The bible calendar had been calculated all along on 354 days to the year – we will call that a biblical lunar year. An exactly accurate scientific lunar year is 354.367 days in length. Therefore on an exactly scientific

basis one would have to add all the missing .367's of a day. When this was calculated it meant adding another 2275 days to 12<sup>th</sup> June.

The resulting date is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1939 – the very day that the Second World War started! What clearer sign could there be that the Gentile nations had moved out of God's blessing.

Perhaps the final link in all of this is the 'Times of the Gentiles' as revealed to Grattan Guinness. He took note of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar of old was eating grass like the animals for 7 years. Nebuchadnezzar was King of Babylon. A Babylonian year was 360 days. Guinness calculated that to be 2,520 days.

He then asked himself if one day might be representative of one year. Tracing the stages in which Israel and Jerusalem fell under Babylonian control Guinness prophesied that 4 particular years would be significant in the return of Jews to Israel. This he did on the basis that the gentiles would find favour with God until it was time for Israel to be restored.

The 4 years were:

- 1914 This turned out to be the start of the First World War
- 1917 The year of the Balfour declaration. Jerusalem captured from the Turks.
- 1923 The League of Nations gives Britain a mandate over Palestine.
- 1933 The cutting off of gentile nations mentioned above.

So here we have a third witness ending in 1933:

- 1) 6,000 years of redemption chronology end.
- 2) 6,000 Julian years end.
- 3) 2,520 years – the times of the gentiles end.

### **The present time**

One might react that we are left with a problem. If the 2,000 years of the current age ended on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1933 what are we living in now? The answer is simple – we live in a period God is not counting – it appears

to be an unreckoned period. At this time the scene is being set for the next dispensation – the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Before that starts there are some loose ends to deal with:

- 1) The Jews must be regathered.
- 2) The church must be removed.
- 3) Ten kings must arise to reign for a short period. (Revelation 17)
- 4) The last week of Daniel's '70 weeks' prophecy must be reopened and relived as 'The Day of Jacob's Trouble.'
- 5) Antichrist must arise and call the nations to gather against Jerusalem.
- 6) The Jews must call for their Messiah with the words 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.' (Matthew 23:39)
- 7) The Jesus will return and reign.

This is the exciting age in which we live – the scene being set for the winding up of this part of God's redemptive plan and moving on to the next. In the same way that there was a lot of misunderstanding when the Jewish Age gave way to the Gentile Age, there is a lot of misunderstanding now. That is why we have studied 'dispensations' and given this chronological evidence which clearly proves the point.

Just how long it will take for the seven points above to be accomplished is not known. Any comment would therefore be speculative. However, it is clear from world events that time is closing in. (Refer to 'Explaining the future')

### **The millennial age to come.**

We have already stated that the bible sees this period as being 1,000 years in length, starting from the return of Jesus from heaven. This is the age of glory. The church will reign with Jesus as His bride. Israel will be chief of the nations. This is a time soon coming upon us– it is the longed for inheritance of the saints.

## Scriptures relating to the Law

It is instructive to compare the mystery and its purpose to what the New Testament tells us about the Law:

It is a ministry of death	2 Corinthians 3:7
It is a ministry of condemnation	2 Corinthians 3:9
It stirs up sin	Romans 7:5
It is a tutor pointing to Christ	Galatians 3:24
It cannot justify	Romans 3:19-20

### **We are:**

Not under law	Romans 6:14
Dead to the Law and married to another	Romans 7:1-6
Dead in Christ is dead to the Law	Galatians 2:9

### **The Law is now:**

Passing away	2 Corinthians 3:11
Made obsolete	Hebrews 8:13
Annulled	Hebrews 7:18 (Note Jesus
could not be our High Priest if the Law was still in operation for us)	
Brings barrenness	Galatians 3:10 ( text states
‘for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse’ here	
<i>katara</i> in the Greek has been rendered curse but more fully means	
‘doomed to barrenness.’	

We are called to walk by the Spirit, demonstrating God’s manifold wisdom as we travel through life. We are not called to keep the law – we render ourselves unfruitful if we try to do so.