



Basic Bible Course

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth



Lesson One

INTRODUCTION: The apostle Paul, in writing to a young Christian preacher, Timothy, said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH**” (2 Timothy 2:15). The “word of truth” is the Bible, the Word of God. (John 17:17). Handled aright, this Word points the way from Earth to Heaven. Wrongly “divided,” however, the “word of truth” can be changed into the word of ERROR. If we would be “workmen that need not be ashamed,” let us approach the Word of truth reverently that we divide it aright...

I. THE BIBLE IS GOD’S GREAT LIBRARY.

- A. Undivided, the Bible contains a total of 66 books.
- B. The **FIRST** major division of the Bible is the **OLD** Testament.
 - 1. The Old Testament contains 39 separate books.
 - 2. The Old Testament covers two distinct dispensations or grand periods of religion.
 - a. From Genesis 1:1 up to Exodus 20, God dealt with the patriarchs by **INDIVIDUALS** and **FAMILIES**.
 - b. From Exodus 20 through Malachi (in fact, on up to Acts 2) God dealt with the **JEWS** as a **NATION**.
 - 3. Approximately 32 writers, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, set down the words of the Old Testament.
 - a. Some Bible scholars think the Book of **JOB** is the oldest book in the Bible; others think the writings of **MOSES** are the oldest.
 - b. In either case, the Old Testament required approximately 1,100 years to complete.
 - c. The last writings of the Old Testament were finished approximately 400 years before Christ.
- C. The **SECOND** major division of the Bible is the **NEW** Testament.
 - 1. The New Testament contains 27 separate books.
 - 2. The first four books of the New Testament, up to the 2nd chapter of Acts, are somewhat transitional, leading from the Jewish dispensation to the Christian dispensation.
 - a. In these books the basic principles of the Christian faith are clearly announced.
 - b. However, they did not come into force until the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.
 - 3. From Acts 2 on the **NEW** Testament (i.e., Christian) dispensation was in force.
 - 4. Eight writers, in all, recorded the words chosen by the Holy Spirit as they wrote the books of the New Testament.
 - a. Roughly 40 to 60 years were consumed, in this endeavor.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS PROPERLY DIVIDED INTO FIVE SECTIONS:

- A. The first section of the Old Testament is primarily LAW.
 - 1. It comprises five books.
 - a. Genesis
 - b. Exodus
 - c. Leviticus
 - d. Numbers
 - e. Deuteronomy
 - 2. From Genesis 1:1 to Exodus 20, God revealed his will to INDIVIDUALS and FAMILIES.
 - a. The male heads of families, known as “patriarchs,” served as a sort of PRIESTS to their families.
 - b. God gave no general system of religion during this period, covering approximately 2,500 years.
 - 3. Beginning with Exodus 20, at Mount Sinai (in Arabia), the remainder of the Old Testament was to the children of Israel, i.e. the Jews.
- B. The second section of the Old Testament is primarily HISTORY.
 - 1. It comprises 12 books.
 - a. Joshua
 - b. Judges
 - c. Ruth
 - d. 1 Samuel
 - e. 2 Samuel
 - f. 1 Kings
 - g. 2 Kings
 - h. 1 Chronicles
 - i. 2 Chronicles
 - j. Ezra
 - k. Nehemiah
 - l. Esther
 - 2. This historical section is written and assembled in chronological order.
 - 3. It is a history of God’s dealings with the Jewish nation from their entry into Canaan to approximately 400 B.C.
- C. The third section of the Old Testament is primarily LITERATURE.
 - 1. It comprises five books.
 - a. Job
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Proverbs
 - d. Ecclesiastes
 - e. Song of Solomon
 - 2. As in the other sections, of course, a little law, a little history and even a little prophecy are scattered through these books here and there.
 - 3. However, for the most part, their nature is literary or poetical.
 - a. They are noted for their beauty and incisiveness of expression.
 - b. They contain truth that is eternal.
- D. The fourth section of the Old Testament contains the MAJOR PROPHETS.
 - 1. It comprises five books.
 - a. Isaiah
 - b. Jeremiah

- c. Lamentations
 - d. Ezekiel
 - e. Daniel
 - 2. This section is generally referred to by Bible scholars as “major prophets,”
 - a. Not because these prophecies are any more important than the other prophecies;
 - b. Rather because these writings are MORE EXTENSIVE than those of the other prophets.
- E. This fifth section of the Old Testament is called the MINOR PROPHETS.
 - 1. It comprises 12 books
 - a. Hosea
 - b. Joel
 - c. Amos
 - d. Obadiah
 - e. Jonah
 - f. Micah
 - g. Nahum
 - h. Habakkuk
 - i. Zephaniah
 - j. Haggai
 - k. Zechariah
 - l. Malachi
 - 2. These books are called “minor prophets” because they are limited in extent, not because less important.

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT, LIKEWISE, HAS FIVE PRINCIPAL SECTIONS:

- A. The first section of the New Testament, the “gospels,” is BIOGRAPHY.
 - 1. It comprises four books
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Mark
 - c. Luke
 - d. John
 - 2. The purpose of these books is to prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- B. The second section of the New Testament is primarily HISTORY.
 - 1. It comprises one book, The Acts of the Apostles.
 - 2. This book does not pretend to set forth ALL the acts of All the apostles.
 - 3. Rather it tells SOME of the acts of SOME of the apostles.
 - a. From Acts 1 through 12, the history largely centers around the apostle Peter.
 - b. From Acts 13 through 28, the history is devoted mostly to the apostle Paul.
- C. The third section of the New Testament is made up of SPECIAL LETTERS.
 - 1. It comprises 14 books.
 - a. Romans
 - b. 1 Corinthians
 - c. 2 Corinthians
 - d. Galatians
 - e. Ephesians
 - f. Philippians
 - g. Colossians
 - h. 1 Thessalonians

- i. 2 Thessalonians
 - j. 1 Timothy
 - k. 2 Timothy
 - l. Titus
 - m. Philemon
 - n. Hebrews
 2. Paul, the apostle, almost certainly wrote all 14 of these books.
 - a. Some Bible scholars have tried to cast doubt as to his authorship of Hebrews.
 - b. However, most scholars agree that Hebrews, too, was written by Paul.
 3. The purpose of these 14 books is to instruct Christians as to how then should behave and proceed in the church.
- D. The fourth section of the New testament comprises GENERAL LETTERS.
 1. It contains seven books.
 - a. James
 - b. 1 Peter
 - c. 2 Peter
 - d. 1 John
 - e. 2 John
 - f. 3 John
 - g. Jude
 2. The title of each of these books suggests who wrote it.
 3. These books also are for the general instruction of Christians in the church.
- E. The fifth (and last) section of the New Testament is PROPHECY.
 1. It contains one book—Revelation.
 2. It was written by the apostle John on Patmos.
 3. The first three chapters of Revelation deal with matters past and then-present re: “the seven churches of Asia.”
 - a. “Asia” in Revelation refers to Asia Minor, i.e., Turkey.
 - b. The same cities mentioned as in “Asia” are antiquities in modern Turkey right today.
 4. The remaining 19 chapters of Revelation deal mostly with the FUTURE of the church, as from the year A.D. 96, when the book was written.
 - a. Probably much of the material, highly figurative in expression, was “future” in A.D. 96.
 - b. However, there is little doubt that at least PART of Revelation, as prophecy, is yet to be fulfilled.

NOTE: This completes Lesson 1. Study carefully then answer the QUESTIONS ON LESSON 1.