Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, Part 1

The singer of Israel wrote a lengthy song praising God’s word through the entire Hebrew alphabet. Among other things, he said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Paul told Timothy to “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). This verse clearly points out our need to study. Study will help us know what to do to be approved of God through obedience to his will. Paul's words to the young preacher also let us know there is a right and a wrong way to divide scripture. We must carefully study the truth so that we may rightly divide its teachings and be acceptable in God's sight.

Basic Bible Facts

In a sermon on the Bible, N. B. Hardeman observed, “The Bible, unlike all books written by man, does not become obsolete with the passing of years....It is ever fresh, like unto a mountain spring from which all our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers slaked their thirst in generations gone by; and still, to us, the same spring offers that drink afresh, and it will continue to offer it to those yet unborn.” He went on to note that, “unlike most, if not all, of the books written by man, it can be translated into different languages and lose none of its power” (Hardeman’s Tabernacle Sermons, Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1922, pp. 19-20).

Anyone who first begins to look at the Bible needs to understand some basic facts. The Bible could be described as a library containing 66 books written by some 40 authors over a period of approximately 1,600 years. Those authors include kings, a farmer, fishermen, a lawyer, a doctor and a cowboy, just to name a few. Despite their varied backgrounds and the years that separated their writings, these authors’ works flow with a perfect harmony. Though they were not striving to write a science textbook, there is not one word of scripture that is contradicted by a proven fact of science. Further, as archeologists unearth new data, the Bible has proven to be completely accurate in its historical details as well. Yet, the underlying theme of the Bible is not to present a thorough history, but to describe man’s creation, his fall into sin and God’s plan to restore man to fellowship with his Creator.

There are two main divisions of the Bible, the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 books. These books easily divide into 5 books of law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), 12 books of history (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther), 5 books of poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon), 5 major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel) and 12 minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). The New Testament contains 27 books, including 4 gospel records (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), 1 book of history (Acts), 21 letters (Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude) and 1 book of prophecy (Revelation).
Before the World Was Formed

God planned his creation before he began to create. His plan included the free moral agency of man, which meant that man could sin and fall away from God. Thus, God prepared for the eventuality of man's fall before he framed the world. In speaking of our redemption by the precious blood of the Savior, Peter says: "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Peter 1:18-20). Paul agrees with Peter and says God chose that the saved would be in Christ all along, but did not send him until the time was right.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...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 (Ephesians 1:3-4,10).

Creation and the Fall

Man was formed by God out of the dust of the ground and created in the image of God. God made a special garden and placed man in it to "tend and keep it" (Genesis 1:26; 2:7-15). Besides these assigned tasks, God set forth only one law, so far as the written record is concerned. Man was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17). Woman was created to be a suitable helper for man (2:18).

Satan became the father of liars by adding just one word to that which God had said (Genesis 3:4; John 8:44). He told a partial truth that made sin seem attractive (Genesis 3:5,7,22). He appealed to fleshly desire by telling Eve that the fruit was good for food. He aroused her desire through sight, as she saw that it was "pleasant to the eyes." He took advantage of wrongful pride through causing her to think it was "to be desired to make one wise" (3:6; 1 John 2:15-17). In God's words to the serpent, after man's fall, God presented the first great foreshadowing of his plan to send Christ; "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (3:15). In his death on the cross, Jesus suffered a painful bruise like one we might get on the heel, but in his resurrection he dealt a mortal, or head, wound to Satan.

While in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed a close relationship with God (Genesis 3:8). Man's sin placed a barrier between him and his creation (Isaiah 59:1-2). The long road to the restoration of that relationship, or fellowship, began with the Patriarchal Age. During that age, God spoke to the head of the house, or Patriarch.
Questions

I. FILL IN THE BLANK: Write the correct words that complete the statement.

1. "Be diligent to present yourself ________________ to God."

2. God's plan included the ____________ _______ _______ of man.

3. Man was __________ in the __________ of God.

4. Satan became the _______ of ____________ by adding just one word.

5. Satan took advantage of Eve's pride because the fruit was "to be desired to make one ________________ ."

6. God would put ______________ between Satan and the woman.

7. The __________ of Christ dealt a mortal, or head, wound to Satan.

8. Man's __________ placed a __________ between him and God.

9. The road to restoration began with the ______________ age.

10. Our redemption is by the ______________ of ______________ .

II. MATCHING: Match the statement with the correct verse by placing the letter in the blank.

___ 1. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of the tree. A. Isaiah 59:1,2

___ 2. Satan would bruise Christ's heel. B. I Peter 1:18-20

___ 3. Christ was foreordained to save man in himself C. Genesis 3:15

___ 4. Study D. Gen. 2:16-17

___ 5. Woman was created to be a suitable help meet. E. 2 Tim. 2:15

___ 6. Sin came between God and man. F. Gen. 2:18
III. CHALLENGE QUESTIONS: Bonus

1. Examine the lesson carefully and explain why it is correct to say that God did not cause man to sin or fall from his favor.

2. Name the three categories of sin and name or list some modern sins that fit in those areas.