

FOR CLARITY OF THE TWO PROGRAMS: (So We Can See The Acts Transition)

Introduction: When the truth of God's Word is at variance with society's view or a church's traditional belief, God's Word is to be **believed** and followed.

A. Concerning the Scriptures and searching them, there are two very important principles/practices we are to do:

1. We study God's Word to believe, grow, and **follow**.

Note: God's amazing power worked in us to make us one of His own. However, His power does not stop there. God has also given us His divine power of His **Word**, making it available to us on a daily basis. By our studying God's Word daily, we receive strength for our inner man.

a. Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

*This verse tells us God's Word has the **ability** to work within the believer's deepest, innermost part of his being. God's Word produces within us proper motivation, encouragement, comfort, and joy, along with stability and peace in the face of difficulties and trials.

b. I Thessalonians 2:13 - For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

*God has designed His Word, in the hands of His Spirit within us, to be the source of His power to us in the details and areas of our lives.

**God has designed for His Word to effectually work within us to energize and provide what is necessary for our daily lives.

II Corinthians 4:7, 13, 16 - But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2Cor. 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 2Cor. 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Philippians 2:13 - For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2. We study God's Word to understand the Scriptures **rightly**.

II Timothy 2:15 - Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

a. To "rightly divide" means to recognize and correctly make the divisions of the Bible, as to be able to see the differences of God's **two** programs.

b. We know God has a two-fold program, plan, and purpose. One centers around Israel and the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed. This program pertains to earth, a **King**, and a kingdom.

- c. The second one centers around God's "new creation", the "one new man", and the Church Body of Christ that He is now forming in this present dispensation of grace. This program pertains to the heavenly places and had been hidden, kept secret, in God's heart until Paul. (Eph. 2:11-3:12)

Note: The issue of having God's power of His Word working within us has been a much abused subject today.

- (1) Because of Christendom's failure to "rightly divide" the Word of truth, Christendom has failed to see God's two programs, the Kingdom and the Body.
- (2) Because of this, the average Christian expects God's power to operate in their lives with the same manifestations as He did with Israel in the Old Testament, the Four Gospels, and the early chapters of Acts.
- (3) Thus God's power is looked for in the form of outward signs, visible wonders, physical deliverance, and direct interventions by God in His people's lives. They seek what God did in "Time Past" for today!
- (4) But we know and understand that God's program with Israel is not God's program for today. Also, God deals with us today completely different than he dealt with Israel. God covenanted with Israel that His power would be evidenced by means of physical outward, miraculous signs. Thus, Israel expected and looked for these signs as evidence that God was working or present amongst them.

Note: However, God's program with us today is different. God's power is being displayed not by outward signs, but rather it is in our inner man. By providing inner foundational strength, we are able to endure whatever comes our way in this present evil world. God's Word stabilizes us and puts us on display to make an impact upon Satan and his angels. When we stand against Satan's wiles and fiery darts, we honor and glorify our God for His work within us.

- (5) Today it is:

II Corinthians 5:7 - (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Ephesians 3:16-17, 19-21 - That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; Eph. 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, Eph. 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Eph. 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Eph. 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Question? Have we seen the difference in God's two programs and the transitioning of God's first program to His second in Acts - from the Kingdom Church, that is earthly, to the Body Church, that is heavenly?

B. Notice the differences between the two:

1. The 12 were called to be apostles by the Lord while He was here on the earth. (Matthew 10:1-4)

Paul was called to be an apostle by the unexpected reappearing of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven. (Acts 9:1ff; I Corinthians 15:8-10)

2. The apostleship of the 12 was to Israel alone and then to Israel first, because God's program at that time was with Israel. (Matthew 10:5ff; Acts 3:25-26)

Paul was commissioned as "the apostle of the Gentiles" and was sent out to the nations, because the program of God is now the "dispensation of the grace of God" for us Gentiles. (Romans 11:13; Ephesians 3:1ff)

3. Peter and the other apostles had the "gospel of the circumcision" committed to them, to proclaim the good news of Israel's covenant kingdom and blessings. (Matthew 10:6-8; Galatians 2:7-8)

Paul had the "gospel of the uncircumcision" committed unto him - the good news of God now being long-suffering and having turned to the Gentiles to accomplish a secret purpose with us. (Galatians 2:7-8)

4. The 12, under the commission, sought to bring the nation of Israel to repentance in view of their crucifying their Christ. They indicted them for the crime, but offered them the forgiveness and blessing of God so they could participate in Israel's "at hand" kingdom. (Acts 3:12-26; 5:27-32)

Paul, under his commission, announced that Israel had fallen and that God had temporarily set Israel's program aside. Her fullness and kingdom would not come until after the "fullness of the Gentiles be come in". (Romans 11:11-25)

5. Peter and the other apostles announced to Israel that her "last days" were present and that they lived in the days that all the prophets from Samuel and after had foretold. (Acts 2:16-21; 3:24)

Paul announced that God is now longsuffering and that He has set Israel and the things on her time-schedule aside. "The times and the seasons" are not being fulfilled now in this present dispensation. (Romans 11:11-25; I Thessalonians 5:1-11; II Thessalonians 2:1-7)

6. Peter and the other apostles proclaimed to Israel the coming of "the times of refreshing" and the "times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-22)

Paul proclaimed "the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began" and was "hid in God" in ages and generations past. (Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:1-6; Colossians 1:25-26)

7. The 12 were commissioned and sent to water baptize in connection with the "gospel of the kingdom". (John 4:1-2; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38ff)

The Apostle Paul was not sent to water baptize. (I Corinthians 1:17)

8. The 12, under their commission, operated upon a distinction existing between the Jews and the Gentiles. (Matthew 10:5-7, 15:21-28; Acts 3:25-26)

Paul, under his commission, now declares that the "time past" distinction has been done away and the "middle wall of partition" is broken down - God having made "both one". Now, there is "no difference". (II Corinthians 5:14-19; Ephesians 1:11-14)

9. The 12 operated with the law still in view, along with the "rudiments of the world" it employed. (Matthew 5:17-19, 23:1-3)

Paul declares to us that God has not put us under the law, but under grace. He is not treating us as children today under the law with the "rudiments of the world". (Romans 6:14; Galatians 4:1-11; Colossians 2:8-17)

10. The 12 were commissioned to preach the "gospel of the kingdom" to Israel, and to manifest the signs of the kingdom to them. (Matthew 10:1-8)

Paul was commissioned to preach the "gospel of the grace of God" to the Gentiles and to manifest signs that confirmed the reality of God having turned to the Gentiles. (Romans 15:14-19)
This was until the transition was over in Acts 28:28.

11. The 12 warned Israel of the coming wrath of God and were prepared by the Lord to see, and also go through, the tribulation period. (Matthew 24:1-35; Acts 2:14-40, 3:19-23)

Paul declares to us the longsuffering of God and the coming of the Lord for us - to gather us together unto Himself, delivering us from the wrath to come. (I Thessalonians 1:10, 4:13-5:11)

12. The 12 preached the "gospel of the kingdom" to Israel for the three years of the Lord's earthly ministry. But, they did not understand and appreciate the meaning and significance of Christ's death and resurrection. (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 9:43-45, 18:31-34) Following Christ's resurrection, when He had "opened their understanding, that they might understand scriptures", they understood the necessity of Christ's suffering - but only as it pertained to the establishment of Israel's kingdom glory. (Luke 24:25-27, 44-49; Acts 1:1-12, 2:22-36, 3:12-21, 4:8-12)

To Paul was committed the full meaning and significance of the cross of Christ. His message was "the preaching of the cross," proclaiming it in all its glory as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God". To him was committed the "due time" testimony concerning Christ giving Himself "a ransom for all men". Also, to Paul was committed the revelation of "the mystery of God's will", and how it will be accomplished through the genius of Christ's death and resurrection. (I Corinthians 1:22-24; I Timothy 2:1-7; I Corinthians 2:6-8; Ephesians 1:8-10)

13. Peter and the other apostles looked for and preached the earthly inheritance of Israel's covenanted kingdom. (Matthew 5:1-12ff, 19:27-30; Acts 3:19-21)

Paul, in connection with "the mystery of Christ", says to us that our citizenship is in heaven, and that we are seated "together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus". The "vocation" unto which we have been called is in the heavenly places, in accordance with Christ being head of all principality and power. (Philippines 3:20-21; Ephesians 1:19-23, 2:-6:)

14. The 12 only knew of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ after the tribulation period. (Matthew 24:15-35; Acts 1:9-12, 3:19-21)

Paul, as part of the mystery revelation given to him, teaches us about a coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for us before the day of His wrath. (I Corinthians 15:50-52; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)

15. The 12 functioned in connection with God calling out of Israel a seed to inherit the kingdom. (Matthew 16:13-20, 21:33-45; Luke 12:32)

Paul functioned as "the apostle of the Gentiles", in connection with God having set Israel's program temporarily aside and having put Jew and Gentile on the **same** level - for "to make in himself twain one new man"; the "new creature", the church, the body of Christ. (Ephesians 2:11-3:12)

16. The 12 were commissioned in their apostleship to bring Israel's rebelliousness to a head, and in so doing to vindicate the outpouring of God's wrath upon **that** generation. (Matthew 23:29-36; Luke 11:45-51)

Paul was commissioned to proclaim that God is now longsuffering and is extending mercy and grace to **all**, even in spite of Israel's climactic rebelliousness. (Romans 11:28-36)

17. The 12 apostles looked forward to dealing with the Gentiles through Israel's **regeneration** and glory. (Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8, 3:25-26)

The Apostle Paul was commissioned by God and sent to us Gentiles in connection with Israel's stumbling and fall, and God's **blinding** of the nation. (Romans 11:1-25)

18. The 12 apostles, in their call and commission, were fulfilling the prophets. They were sent to **Israel** in accordance with God's promise to them. (John 17:6-12; Luke 11:49-51)

The Apostle Paul was given a gracious apostleship to us Gentiles, not based upon any **promise**, **prophecy**, or **covenant** with us. (Romans 1:1-5; Ephesians 2:11-12, 3:1-9; II Timothy 1:9-11)

~Keith Blades

Acts 17:11-12 - These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

II Timothy 2:15 - Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.