

RIGHTLY DIVIDING

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

A READER'S BRIEF



HOLY BIBLE



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ABOUT THIS BRIEF

WHY WE PUT THIS TOGETHER

Many people pick up the New Testament wanting to read it and end up confused. Not because the Bible is hard. But because no one explained how it is put together.

The Joe Bible Coach 88-Day New Testament Reading Plan reads through the entire New Testament in 88 days. Each day covers three chapters from three different sections of the New Testament at the same time. The plan follows a simple framework: the New Testament has five sections, written to different people at different times, represented by three colours: Green. Yellow. Blue.

This Reader's Brief explains that framework. It is designed to be read before you start the 88-day plan so that every chapter makes sense from day one.

A NOTE ON USE

This document is free to use for personal reading, small group study, and sharing with others. It is not a statement of church doctrine. It is a teaching tool designed to help people read their Bible with greater understanding.

This material is intended to encourage Bible reading, not replace it. Joe Bible Coach holds these views with conviction and humility, recognizing that other believers may see things differently.

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THE PROBLEM

Millions of sincere Bible readers carry quiet confusion they rarely voice. The New Testament appears to contradict itself. Jesus tells his disciples to keep the Law. Paul says believers are not under Law but under grace. James says a man is justified by works. Paul says justification is by faith alone. Same Bible. Same God. Apparently contradictory instructions.

Most readers handle this one of three ways: they apply every verse equally to every person in every age; they avoid the sections that confuse them; or they walk away from the Bible altogether. There is a fourth option. It has been in the pages of the Bible the whole time.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth. (AMPC¹)

The Greek word translated rightly dividing is *orthotomeo*, (Greek: ὀρθοτομέω,) meaning to cut (*temno*), straight or right (*Orthos*). The command is not merely to read carefully but to handle Scripture with precision, cutting along the lines God himself drew rather than imposing lines of our own. If it is possible to rightly divide the word, it is equally possible to wrongly divide it. That carelessness, Paul warns, leads to the ruin of the hearers **(2 Timothy 2:14)**.

1. Scripture quotation taken from the Amplified® Bible, Classical (AMPC), Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.Lockman.org.



THE FRAMEWORK

The New Testament can be understood through five sections, represented by three colors. This is not a modern invention. It is the structure the New Testament itself provides.

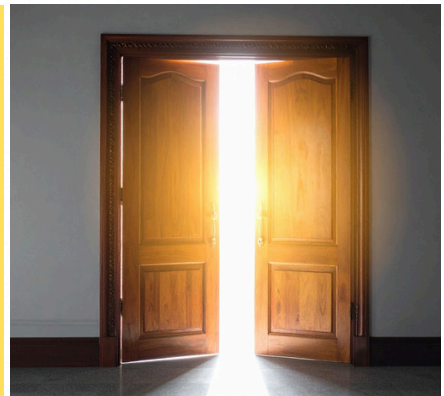


KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

Matthew through John, and James through Revelation. Primarily addressed to Israel. Earthly Kingdom promises rooted in the Old Testament covenants with King David and the prophets.

TRANSITIONS BETWEEN THE GOSPELS

Acts on the left, Hebrews on the right. These are hinge books, recording and explaining the movement between one administration of God and another. Neither fully Kingdom nor fully Grace.



DISPENSATION OF GRACE

Romans through Philemon. Thirteen letters from Paul containing the specific doctrine, promises, and instructions addressed to the Body of Christ living in the age of grace. This is where the believer today finds their primary doctrinal address.

To understand the framework and get clarity, always ask these 2 questions:

- **Who was this written to?**
- **Where does this sit in God's unfolding plan?**



THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE

The case for rightly dividing is built on more than thirty verses drawn from Genesis to Revelation. Together they form a coherent, bible based argument that God has dealt differently with different people at different points in his redemptive plan.

Old Testament Foundation

God made unconditional, nationally specific promises to Abraham: a land, a nation, and a blessing flowing to all the families of the earth through his descendants (**Genesis 12:1-3**).

The land boundaries are named precisely in **Genesis 15:18**. These promises are geographic, not metaphorical. They were never cancelled and never transferred to a different entity.

Israel was set apart deliberately as a covenant nation (**Exodus 19:5-6**). **Deuteronomy 30:1-6** describes a future cycle of dispersion, repentance, and physical and spiritual restoration that has not yet been completely fulfilled. The promises are still in force.

The Davidic covenant (**2 Samuel 7:12-16**) added a royal dimension: a son of David on a throne, a kingdom established forever.



Jeremiah 31:31-37 names the New Covenant specifically with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not with the church.

Ezekiel 36 and 37 describe national restoration inseparably linked with spiritual renewal. **Daniel 9:24-27** places seventy weeks of years on Israel and Jerusalem specifically. **Zechariah 12 and 14** describe national repentance and the Lord's return to reign on earth from Jerusalem.

None of these promises have been cancelled. The New Testament confirms this explicitly in **Romans 11**.

The Gospels: The Green Section

Jesus arrived as the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises. His birth was announced in the language of national covenant fulfilment (**Luke 1:32-33, 1:68-75**). He restricted his disciples from going to Gentiles or Samaritans, sending them only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (**Matthew 10:5-6**). He defined his own mission in the same terms: I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel (**Matthew 15:24**).

The church was still future at this point. Jesus said I will build my church, future tense (**Matthew 16:18**). The twelve apostles were promised thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel, not authority over the church (**Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:29-30**). The Olivet Discourse of **Matthew 24** addresses Tribulation-era events with Sabbath language, Judea geography, and the Kingdom gospel, all pointing to a future period beyond the present church age.

John 1:11-12 captures the tension precisely: he came to his own (Israel, nationally) and his own received him not; but to as many as received him (individually), he gave the right to become children of God. **John 4:22** confirms that salvation came to the world through Israel.



Acts: The Yellow Transition

Acts records thirty years of the most significant transition in the history of God's dealings with humanity. The disciples in **Acts 1:6-7** ask whether Jesus will restore the Kingdom to Israel. He corrects only the timing, not the expectation. The Kingdom promise stands.

Peter continues offering the Kingdom to Israel in **Acts 3:19-21**, linking national repentance to the return of Christ and the restitution of all things. Stephen's speech in **Acts 7** rehearses Israel's pattern of resistance, culminating in his martyrdom. The conversion of Saul in **Acts 9:15** commissions a new apostle, placing Gentiles first in the order of his mission.

Acts 13:46-47 records the formal turning: It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. The transition is complete. The parenthesis of the grace age is fully open.

Romans through Philemon: The Blue Section

Paul's thirteen letters are the doctrinal heart of the church age.

Romans 9:4-5 confirms that the covenants and promises still belong to Israel even as Paul writes to Gentile believers about grace. **Galatians 2:7-9** records the Jerusalem agreement: the gospel of the circumcision to Peter, the gospel of the uncircumcision to Paul. Two apostles, two primary audiences, one risen Lord.

Ephesians 3:3-6 reveals the mystery hidden in previous ages: that Gentiles should be fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the same promise in Christ. This mystery was not hinted at in the Old Testament. It was genuinely hidden and is now disclosed through



Paul alone. **Romans 8:1** is the crown of the grace gospel: there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Unconditional. Present tense. Complete.

Hebrews: The Second Yellow Transition

Hebrews is written to Jewish believers and is the transition forward to the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. God is fulfilling his promises to his covenant people, Israel, who are still under the Mosaic law but believe in the name of Jesus Christ. (**Hebrews 13:20**)

James through Revelation: The Second Green Section

Romans 11:1-2 answers directly: has God cast away his people? Absolutely not. **Romans 11:25-29** provides the structure: Israel's hardening is partial and temporary, lasting until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. All Israel will be saved. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance, irrevocable.

Revelation 7:4-8 names the twelve tribes individually, sealing 144,000 from Israel for service in the Tribulation. These are not the church under a different name. They are Israel, nationally identified, tribally organised.

Revelation 20:1-6 describes the thousand-year Kingdom in which every Old Testament earthly promise finds its fulfilment.

Revelation 21:12-14 closes the entire biblical story with the New Jerusalem bearing both the names of the twelve tribes on its gates and the names of the twelve apostles on its foundations. Israel and the church: both present, both distinct, both honoured, into eternity.



WHAT RIGHTLY DIVIDING RESOLVES

The framework resolves the apparent contradictions that cause most Bible readers the greatest confusion.

James says justified by works. Paul says by faith alone.

James 1:1 addresses the twelve tribes scattered, writing in the context of the Kingdom gospel where faith produces visible works for Kingdom people. Paul writes to the Body of Christ under grace. Different audiences, different administrations, no contradiction.

Jesus says keep the Law. Paul says not under Law.

Jesus speaks to Jewish men and women whose national identity is defined by the Mosaic covenant. Paul writes to the Body of Christ after the transition of Acts. Both are correct for their respective audiences and administrations.

Hebrews 6 warns of falling away. Romans 8 says nothing can separate us.

Hebrews is the second yellow section, written to Jewish believers navigating the transition from old covenant to new, warning against returning to the temple system. **Romans 8:38-39** is written to the Body of Christ under grace. Both passages are correct for their respective audiences.



Acts 2:38 requires baptism. Ephesians 2:8-9 excludes works.

Acts is the yellow transition book. Peter's message in **Acts 2** is the Kingdom gospel still being offered to Israel. Paul's message in Ephesians is the grace gospel for the Body of Christ. Both are historically accurate records. Only one is the doctrinal address of the church age believer.

Matthew 6:12 says forgive or God won't forgive you. Ephesians 4:32 says God has already forgiven you.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount conditions forgiveness on the forgiveness extended to others. Paul writing to the Body of Christ says: forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath already forgiven you. The first is Kingdom law for Kingdom people. The second is grace reality for the grace believer. The believer under grace does not earn forgiveness by forgiving others. They forgive because they have already been fully forgiven.

Mark 16:16 says he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.

Romans 10:9 says believe in your heart and confess with your mouth.

Mark 16 sits in the green section, recording the commission given in the context of the Kingdom gospel to Israel, where water baptism was the outward covenant sign of Kingdom entry.

Romans 10:9 is Paul writing to the Body of Christ under grace: heart belief and mouth confession, no water, no external rite. The difference is not contradiction. It is the Kingdom gospel and the grace gospel located precisely where the framework says they belong.



THREE QUESTIONS FOR EVERY PASSAGE

These three questions, applied consistently, transform the reading of every New Testament passage.

1. Who is the primary audience?

Is this addressed to Israel under the Kingdom gospel, to a transitional community in Acts or Hebrews, or to the Body of Christ under the dispensation of grace? The answer shapes primary application.

2. Where does this sit in God's unfolding plan?

Is this in the period of the Kingdom offer, the transition between administrations, the grace age we currently inhabit, or the future Kingdom age described in prophetic Scripture? The answer shapes temporal understanding.

3. What does this reveal about God's character universally?

God's faithfulness, holiness, love, justice, mercy, and wisdom are on display in every section of Scripture regardless of its primary audience or temporal location. Every passage teaches something about God that transcends its immediate context.



CONCLUSION

The Bible is not a collection of inspiring thoughts assembled over centuries. It is the record of God's dealings with humanity across thousands of years, his promises, his patience, his faithfulness, his plan. Rightly dividing it does not reduce it. It honours it.

God made unconditional promises to a nation. He confirmed them through a royal covenant with David. He fulfilled them in the person of Jesus, who arrived as Israel's King, was rejected by Israel's leadership, and commissioned a new apostle to reveal a mystery hidden since the beginning. That mystery is the Body of Christ: Jew and Gentile together in one new entity, with a heavenly calling and heavenly promises, living in the dispensation of grace. Israel's national story is not finished. Their hardening is partial and temporary. The Kingdom is still coming. Every promise will be kept.

The apparent contradictions in the New Testament are not errors. They are invitations. They are the natural friction that arises when a document addressed to different people at different times is read without a map of who those people were and when those times occurred.

This brief is that map. One Bible. One God. One magnificent, unstoppable plan.

**2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
(King James Version)**

