

Lesson 15**Contrasts**

A *contradiction* is a statement that opposes or denies another statement. As we learned in lesson one, the Bible does not contradict itself. However, many skeptics accuse the Bible of having contradictions. All too often, Christians reinterpret what the Bible says in order to remove apparent contradictions. When this happens, both the skeptics and the Christians are mishandling God's Word. Though the Bible is free from contradictions, it is very important to realize that the Bible does contain many *contrasts*. A contrast is a difference between things that are compared. Compare each verse in the pairs of verses listed below. [Don't worry about trying to explain these differences right now. You will understand them as you continue to study these Bible lessons. In this lesson just observe carefully that there are undeniable contrasts in the Bible.]

Circumcision

"This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:10,14).

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Galatians 5:2).

In the book of Genesis God commands every male to be circumcised. If any male is not circumcised, he is cut off from God's people. Paul, on the other hand, warns against being circumcised.

Healing

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" . . . "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:18).

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" . . . "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick" . . . "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh . . . For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20; II Corinthians 12:7-10).

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus Christ commands His disciples to go forth and heal the sick and raise the dead. Mark 16 records the Lord's promise that His disciples will heal the sick. In contrast to this, Paul does not heal Timothy or Trophimus. In one case he merely prescribes medicine and in the other case he leaves a valued co-worker in the ministry sick and departs to

another city. Even Paul himself had a physical problem that he prayed about three times without experiencing healing.

Law and Grace

"Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" . . . "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 27:26; 29:29).

". . . for ye are not under the law, but under grace" . . . "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18).

The book of Deuteronomy commands obedience to all the words of the law. However, Romans and Galatians teach that we *are not* under the law if we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Eating Pork

"And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you" (Leviticus 11:7-8).

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith . . . commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Timothy 4:1-5).

In Leviticus we read that pork is unclean and must not be eaten. I Timothy clearly teaches that pork is not unclean and it may be eaten.

An Unbelieving Mate

". . . Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives . . . let it be done according to the law . . . And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives . . . separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives . . ." (Ezra 10:2-4,10-12).

". . . If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away . . . the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband . . ." (I Corinthians 7:12-14).

Ezra warned the men that they must separate from their unbelieving wives. Paul encouraged the men not to separate from their unbelieving wives.

The Sabbath

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" . . . "how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days . . ." (Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:9-11).

One of the ten commandments in Exodus is that the Sabbath must be observed. Paul says we should not observe holy days such as the Sabbath.

Genealogies

"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood" . . . "to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites" (Ezra 2:62; II Chronicles 31:16-19).

"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do" . . . "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (I Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9).

In Ezra and I Chronicles genealogies were very important and it was necessary to give heed to them. In I Timothy and Titus genealogies are not important and you must not give heed to them.

Speaking in Tongues

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews . . . every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4-6).

"to another divers kinds of tongues . . . dividing to every man severally as he will . . . do all speak with tongues?" . . . "whether there be tongues, they shall cease . . . that which is in part shall be done away" (I Corinthians 12:9-11,28-30; I Corinthians 13:8-10).

The disciples in Acts 2 all spoke with tongues. In I Corinthians 12 they do not all speak with tongues. Furthermore, in chapter 13 the Corinthians are told that tongues will cease.

Ordinances

"Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God" . . . "keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do" (Leviticus 18:4; Numbers 9:14).

"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" . . . "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).

Leviticus and Numbers command the keeping of certain ordinances. Ephesians and Colossians teach that the ordinances have been abolished; blotted out; taken out of the way.

Review Questions

True or False

1. The Bible does not have any contradictions.
2. The disciples of Christ were never commanded to heal the sick or raise the dead.
3. Some cults forbid the eating of pork, but there is no verse in the Bible that forbids pork as part of the diet.
4. The book of Colossians teaches that the Sabbath must be observed.

Multiple Choice

5. In Acts 2:
 - a) all of the disciples spoke in tongues.
 - b) some of the disciples spoke in tongues.
 - c) the Holy Spirit gave most of the disciples the gift of tongues.
 - d) the gift of tongues had ceased.

6. The Bible:
 - a) contains many contradictions.
 - b) contains many errors.
 - c) contains many contrasts.
 - d) can only be understood by pastors.

7. In the Old Testament, circumcision:

- a) was optional.
- b) was commanded.
- c) was never practiced.
- d) is never mentioned.

Fill in the Blanks

8. James says that a man is justified by ____.

9. Paul encouraged men not to _____ from their unbelieving wives.

10. In Ezra and I Chronicles _____ were very important.

Lesson 16

Understanding the Bible

Most people who look at Christianity today are bewildered by the multitude of denominations and doctrines. No wonder that so many are confused and unstable. Several have written books and given seminars on "How to interpret the Bible." However, many of these books and seminars change what the Bible really says to remove apparent contradictions such as those we studied in lesson 15. In doing this, they only add further to the confusion.

Rightly Dividing

The Bible is not so difficult to understand as many people think it is. The key to unlocking its riches is found in the Word of God. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). We can never understand the Bible unless we obey God and rightly divide His Word. What does it mean to rightly divide? The Greek word means to make a straight cut. We could think of a dressmaker cutting out pieces of cloth. Each piece of cloth must be properly cut and then placed in the appropriate place if the dress is to be a garment fit to wear. In the same way, we must rightly divide (or cut straight) the Word of God. Each portion must then be placed in the appropriate dispensation.

Divisions in Ephesians 2

Not only does God tell us to rightly divide, but He gives us the divisions in the Bible. Ephesians 2:11 speaks of "**time past**"; Ephesians 2:13 tells about "**now**"; and Ephesians 2:7 looks to "**the**

ages to come." Here, then, are three divisions in the Word of God: 1)time past; 2)now; or 3)the ages to come. Ephesians chapter two makes it clear that each of these three divisions is vastly different from the other two. Whenever we open the Bible, we must know if we are reading about "time past" or "now" or "the ages to come." Many Christians attempt to live their lives on the basis of what God said to people in "time past" or to those who will live in "the ages to come." We can never honor the Lord Jesus Christ until we understand where to look in the Bible to find God's will for us today.

Divisions in Romans 5

Romans 5:13-14 designates a time as being from "**Adam to Moses.**" We can also see in this chapter a time from **Moses to Christ (law to grace)** [see verses 13-16]. Finally, in Romans 5:21, we find **the time when grace reigns** (the time of Paul's gospel). Once again, it is vital that we know if we are reading instructions for: 1)those living before the law; 2)those living under the law; or 3)those living under grace.

Divisions in Galatians 3

Galatians 3:17 refers to "**the promise**" given to Abraham; the same verse also mentions "**the law**" given to Moses 430 years later; verse 23 teaches about the time when "**faith came**" (given to Paul). We must know if the Scripture passage we are reading is part of: 1) "the promise" revealed to Abraham; 2) "the law" revealed to Moses; or 3) "faith" revealed to Paul.

The Foundational Division

Please read the following verses carefully, especially noting the italics and underlining that I have added:

"As he *spake by the mouth of his holy prophets*, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1:70).

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets* since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, *which was kept secret* since the world began" (Romans 16:25).

The first verse quoted above is found in Luke and the historical setting is near the time of the birth of Christ. The events of that time had been spoken of by the Old Testament prophets "*since the world began.*" When we turn the pages in our Bibles from the Old Testament and begin to read in Matthew, we must realize that this is a continuation of what the Old Testament prophets wrote.

In Acts chapter three we find the second verse we have quoted. Historically the setting is shortly after the Day of Pentecost. The death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ had already taken place. All that had taken place was spoken of by the holy prophets "*since the world began.*" Again, this was a continuation of what had been spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

Our third verse is found in Romans. This verse refers to the "revelation of the mystery" which "*was kept secret since the world began.*" This is undeniably different from what we read in Luke and Acts. It is impossible to keep something secret and yet at the same time have all the prophets speaking about it. Romans speaks of a revelation that had previously been kept secret--unknown by any man.

The difference between "prophecy" and "the mystery" is the foundational division in the Bible. In the next several lessons we will study both prophecy and the mystery.

How to Understand the Bible

Why are there so many different denominations? Why are there so many different opinions about topics such as water baptism, speaking in tongues, the Sabbath, eternal security, etc.? It is because many do not obey II Timothy 2:15. They do not rightly divide the word of truth. The only way to understand the Bible is to study it according to the instructions given by God. Rightly dividing the word of truth will open the Word of God to our understanding in a wonderful way. However, we must be willing to set aside the traditions of men and long-held denominational beliefs.

Review Questions

True or False

1. All of the denominations in Christianity are basically the same and equally pleasing to God.
2. There are no divisions in the Bible.
3. The promise given to Abraham and the law given to Moses are two of the divisions found in the Bible.
4. The book of Luke speaks of a mystery that was kept secret since the world began.

Multiple Choice

5. The revelation of the mystery:
 - a) is found in the Old Testament

- b) was revealed to Adam
- c) was kept secret since the world began
- d) is explained in Matthew

6. There are many different denominations because:

- a) God's will is that we worship him in the way that best fits our culture
- b) many Christians do not rightly divide the word of truth
- c) the Holy Spirit leads people to start different kinds of ministries
- d) it is impossible to know for certain how to interpret the Bible

7. The Bible:

- a) is extremely difficult to understand.
- b) can only be understood if we go to seminary or Bible college.
- c) can only be understood if we know Greek and Hebrew.
- d) can be understood only if we rightly divide the word of truth.

Fill in the Blanks

8. Romans five teaches about a time from Adam to ____.

9. "As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been _____" (Luke 1:70).

10. The foundational division in the Bible is _____ and the _____.

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