

Part 2.

A brief word of explanation seems necessary at this point. Some of my quotes won't be from the A.V. As much as I like its style, it wasn't too long before its inconsistencies brought about the Revised Version. Whilst this is more accurate, it isn't as 'homely' as the A.V. What isn't known by everyone is that both the Hebrew and Greek languages used the whole of their alphabets to count with. Consequently the complete Word of God is also written in numbers – something unavoidable when you figure it out. If we believe that God is in fact, God, then you realise that He has the ability to 'lock' His Word into place by numeric patterns. To this end, certain numbers come up on the surface of the Word to reveal what their basic meaning implies. An example of this is the precise number of fishes that were netted after Christ's resurrection, whereas, during His ministry, we find the catch that broke the nets, many of them going back to their natural way of life, is not numbered. A bit of digging into that particular portion of scripture really pays off. It scintillates with the proofs of God's control of His Word. Having checked that this is true, I tend to use one such translation because of its accuracy and also because of the sincerity of the man who did the work. This is a subject I don't want to pursue at this time, but it accounts for the quotes of scripture that are not as per the A.V.)

Let's return to our theme then. I found myself in a Pentecostal church where I was quite happy for a number of years. I would say that the most important thing they taught me was that the Bible was the Word of God. I've never had any problem with that and am, I trust, firmly settled upon the facts stated in 2 Tim: 3v16-17 – *'Every scripture is God breathed, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline (which is) in righteousness: that the man of God be complete, furnished completely unto every good work'*. Despite that, I noticed that certain scriptures did seem to contradict each other, but I put it down to my lack of understanding and have stuck firmly, to this day, to the fact that the Bible is God's Word, 'from cover to cover' as we say. As I didn't, and still don't, believe that God could be wrong, I rested in the fact stated in at Prov: 4v18 – *"the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"* – believing that as I grew in the Lord, the truth of that scripture would come into play and the greater light would solve the apparent problem.

I remember how popular 'promise boxes' used to be, and maybe still are. The boxes contained a number of small squares of paper, each of which had a bible verse printed on it. The idea was that every day you took, at random, one of these pieces of paper and unrolled it. The verse would be 'your promise for the day'. The story goes that a person took their daily 'dose' out of the box and unrolled it. It read, 'And Judas went and hanged himself'. Not being too happy with that one they decided to take another one out. When that was unrolled it read, 'Go and do thou likewise.' It begins to dawn quietly that **context** is important when dealing with the Word of God, not the least important point being, WHO that particular word is addressed to. We're back to taking the right 'medicine' that has been dispensed to us.

Another point one can't fail to notice is the variety of different translations presented to us by the various authorities. The question is, which one is the most accurate. Two things certainly can affect this issue and they are the matter of 'synonyms' and that of 'denominational bias'. Perhaps an example will help here. It really falls into the same category that the 'dispensation' one drops into. If we look at Jn: 3v3 & v7, we find Jesus talking to a 'ruler' of the Jews. This would make him – Nicodemus that is - a member of the Sanhedrin, or put another way, the National Council – see Matt: 5v22 – which was the supreme national court. His approach to Jesus is very diplomatic and also very revealing, for he states that this supreme council, which would later condemn Jesus to death, knew full well that Jesus had come from God, and they recognised this fact by the miracles that were being performed, see Jn: 3v2, - ***'Rabbei, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs which Thou doest, except God be with him.'*** Three years later, with that knowledge still in their heads, they seem to have changed their minds. However, Jesus gets straight to the important matter of 'being born again'. This really is the basis, or foundation of, all that the New Creation involves, and is therefore very important in the Lord's eyes and must be in ours too. After all, you can't feed a creature that isn't around yet. Nicodemus seems to be right out of his depth here and the Lord explains the case more fully to him. Leaving the very important fact that what the Lord was telling him were 'earthly things' as we see from vv's, 10-2, lets fasten onto 'born again'. Whilst it is true that this new birth, which the Lord Jesus is referring to, is a second birth, in that we've all already experienced a natural one, we could assume that the translation would seem to be O.K. But, is it? I'm aware that not everyone can read Greek, but we can all use a concordance once we've had a little practice. Strong's, for instance, will tell you that the word 'again' is the Greek ANOTHEN, and it is no: 509 in the Greek section of the concordance. We then find that its root, or origin, is the Greek word ANO, no: 507, and that ANO's meaning is 'upward' or 'on the top', which gives 'Anothen' the basic meaning of 'from above'. That throws a very important additional light on the matter. Now we've got a 'direction' inherent in our word that the A.V. translators didn't bother to tell us about. Throughout the New Testament they translated Anothen in four different ways, as follows: 'from above', 'again', 'from the beginning (very first)', and, 'the top'. That means that they knew what it meant, but in this case chose a secondary meaning. However, if we take three of the other times the word 'anothen' is used, i.e. Matt 27v51, - ***And lo, the veil of the temple was rent in two from top – (anothen) – to bottom; and the earth shook; etc'***. Mk 15v38 says the same thing & Jn 19v23 tells us that His 'seamless coat' was woven from the 'top' throughout. In each case they use the word 'anothen' and the translators use the word 'top'. They wouldn't have dreamt of telling us that the veil was 'rent from the again to the bottom.' That wouldn't have made sense. From the angle of symbolism, 'from above' or 'the top', can be very significant. Yet, for some reason, they didn't reveal the 'direction' implicit in the word that the Holy Spirit used. However, they don't hide the fact that Jesus said that He was 'from above' and used the same word 'anothen' to say it. The word 'again' doesn't even qualify as a synonym, but, maybe it was a bit of denominational bias. Who knows? It does seem to me that if there is any doubt over the meaning of a word, the sensible thing to do is to see how God, the 'Author', uses it, for 2 Tim 3v16 surely applies all the way through the Bible. Looking at the other three definitions given by the translators, it has to be said that 'again' is the odd man out.

Over the years I had returned a number of times to the theme of ‘Dispensations’ and I started to see that amongst those who had written on the subject, there were some very well known Christians, who were noted for their faith and teachings. It began to appear quite clearly that what they had written added up to the answer to most of the confusion that had split the churches apart over the years. Their writings are numerous, and sometimes lengthy and that doesn’t take into account the fact that at times their arguments are way beyond my limited grasp of the languages involved. However, I found them to be so illuminating that I felt that I should try to put forth a précis of some of the things taught, in the hope that it would entrench these things more deeply into my own heart, and at the same time, hopefully, cast some light out for others to see a little more clearly into the subject as well. So, here goes!

There are two scriptures that have helped me considerably in my present understanding of the Word. (I use the word ‘present’ because I accept the fact that we **grow** in the knowledge of God – see Col: 1v10 – *‘to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing in every good work bearing fruit, and increasing in knowledge of God;’* - and at times we probably need another touch from the Lord, like the man in Mk: 8v22-6.) The first of these two scriptures is 2 Tim: 2v15, and I’ll quote it in full now: *‘Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of the truth.’* On the basis of 2 Tim: 3v16, and applying that truth to 2 Tim 2v15, one can conclude that we are not going to grow to full stature unless we **divide** the Word correctly.

Divisions.

Once we accept the fact that God’s Word needs to be divided, it isn’t a big step to conclude that if we treat the Word as one whole unit, we are likely to get confused by applying to one of the divisions something that belongs to another. However, when one comes to see that God Himself states that we are to ‘rightly divide’ the Word of the Truth, the question arises – well, it did in me – “Am I just to limit myself to the division that seems to apply to me?” After all, I enjoy the whole Word. That was when the second scripture lit up, it being 2 Tim 3v16 – 7, and again I’ll quote it in full: *‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’* (The words ‘inspiration of God’ literally mean ‘God breathed’. That tells us what standard of life is in the scriptures!) But, haven’t we come across that statement before? Haven’t we met those words back in Genesis when God began the work of bringing Man into being. **God breathed** the breath of life into the man’s nostrils and the man became a living soul. But then man met the serpent, and accepted his word into himself. In doing that, he lost the God-breathed life and accepted the word of death. Both these states, i.e life and death came through ‘words’, the one from God and the other from the devil. However, we find the scripture tells us that whosoever you obey, you become the servant of, and as you cannot serve two masters, and Adam chose the serpents information, he came under the rule of death. Now, he didn’t die physically, but he did die to God’s

Word. Therefore he lost the life of God by not listening to, and feeding upon, God's Word. This is what Jesus was saying to Nicodemus. The man had to be – it's one of God's 'musts' - 'born from above'. In other words, he had to receive God's Word, because that was where the missing 'life' was, and once he obeyed it, he would become God's servant again. It isn't just a matter of attending a church, no matter how good it is. Unless you receive God's Word to the point where you OBEY it, all the singing and dancing in a building won't make you alive to God again. During the war years, when the Germans occupied this island, there was a period when for three weeks no food arrived into the island. People existed upon what they had stored, if anything, for the rations were, at that time virtually non-existent. You'll still find houses over here called 'Vega' because that was the name of the Red Cross ship that finally got through with food for them. The only things that were available for people, such as my mother, were some beans. To tell her that a sandwich would 'do her good', wasn't going to help at all. She needed the actual sandwich to EAT. Spiritually we feed upon God's Word – see Prov: 4v20-22. It needs to be taken in by your mind, believed and acted upon. Just being told about it won't do the trick. The New Life comes back when you make God your Master. Put another way, when you become His servant, and that includes yielding to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. When you commit yourself to His Word, and you live by it and allow it to live through you, you are 'born from above'. Jesus stated the issue quite clearly to the Devil himself, as we see from Luke 4v4. So, that settled the matter. In other words, the whole Word of Scripture is profitable to us, for the four purposes listed above, but it needs to be 'rightly divided.' I felt that when I got into the correct division for me, I would know what God's purpose in my life was, and at the same time be free to be corrected, reprov'd, instructed and learn the doctrines of God from the whole of His Word. Something like life is today: we live in a certain country and are bound by its laws, but are free to enjoy the products of the other nations of the world.

Let's take a brief look now and seek to establish what the 'word of the truth' is. It is that that we are required to rightly divide. As God cannot lie, - see Num: 23v19 – ***'God is not a man (ish) that He should lie; neither the son of man (adam) that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?'*** - and that everything He says shall come to pass, then He is, by definition, the Truth, and nothing will fail that He has spoken. As we've seen, the whole of the scriptures have His 'breath of life' in them. Furthermore, we find that in all His dealings with mankind, He has spoken to them, or about them. We see that He speaks directly to some and indirectly to others. Some heard Him indirectly through prophets passing on His Word in the form of speech, or the people received what He had said through His words being written down. In each case it was God speaking to the people.

God's answer to man's sin is, and always has been, His Word. Whether the Word come in human form, spoken or written form, the answer is always in His Word. I like Panin's translation of Lk: 1v37, which states: 'Because no word from God shall be void of power'. It ties in perfectly with Is: 55v11. God's method of creation is His Word. 'The Word was made flesh', what more need be

said? It would be logical therefore, in view of the instruction to ‘rightly divide the word of the truth’, to see if the Word itself gives us any clues as to where we might find these divisions.

We get an important piece of information about this ‘speaking’ in the book of Hebrews. In chap: 1v1, we read that God, Who had in time past, ‘spoken’ at different times and in divers ways to ‘the fathers’ – *guess who the Hebrews understood ‘the fathers’ to be? I doubt if we entered into their thinking at all* – had now spoken to them in a Son. So we see from this second verse another ‘speaking’, this time through ‘a Son’ – *no definite article here* – ‘in these last days’. We cannot make those last four words mean ‘now’, i.e. in our days, or ‘in the last days’ of time, for the Greek has the word ‘these’ there. In any case, the time in which the Son spoke directly to the nation had already passed, so His lifetime covered those ‘last days’. This becomes clear as we read chapter 2v1-4 of Hebrews, where we find that what the Son had said had been confirmed to these Hebrews by ‘them that heard Him’; namely the Twelve. This is important for it is part of a pattern that begins to appear. Before we look a little more closely at it though, let’s not forget the bit about ‘WHO’ God is speaking to. First, Paul refers to the ‘Fathers’. So as far as the Hebrews were concerned, they would understand it to mean Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for sure, but by no means just those three, as the ‘sundry times and divers manners’ would clearly show. We are going to have a job to find ‘prophets’ speaking to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but no problem with those who came later. Then we have the words used in Heb: 2v3, namely ‘us’ and ‘we’. Those two words include Paul as being one with the people he was writing to, thereby confirming his Hebrew nationality. Have you noticed how many Gentiles are included up to this point? What we have is a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who sat ‘at the feet of Gamaliel’, writing to the Hebrews, his nation, on the grounds of his common ancestry with them. Up to this time, as the book of Acts bears witness to, the only way for a Gentile to come into God’s family was as a proselyte, and even then it was not with the fullness of their blessing, as ‘the middle-wall of partition’ clearly demonstrated. This was the situation during this time of the Apostles ministry. In fact, the question was raised and discussed as we see in Acts 15, and apparently not before then.

End of second session - 2/12/09.