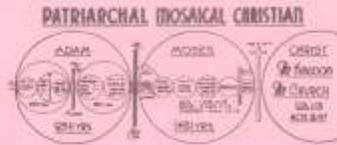


***“Rightly Dividing
The Word Of Truth”***



***GOD
called them
CHRISTIANS***

—By Guy Catkey

Front Cover



**“RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE
WORD OF TRUTH”
(II Timothy 2:15)**

The Bible is no ordinary book. God is its Author, and therefore, its Source. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has

spoken" (Isaiah 1:2). The writer of the book of Hebrews states: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ..." (Hebrews 1:1-2). What needs to be noticed in these, and other passages, is that "God spoke." Almost times without number, the Scriptures uses these expressions: "God spoke" and "God said."

A BOOK FROM GOD

The Bible is not a man-made book. Listen to Paul's clear language: "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). In speaking of God's will, Paul further said: "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:10).

AN INSPIRED BOOK

The Bible is the inspired word of God. "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). What is the meaning of inspired? It is God-breathed. That is, the scriptures are the product of the inbreathing of God upon men He carefully chose and prepared to teach His message of truth. Peter said, "... but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Men who were appointed by God, prepared by God, sent by God, first spoke His words to other men. Inspiration means that they spoke without error. They did not make a mistake, because God was speaking through them. So, the Bible is God's book. It is God's book for man, and it deserves all the respect that men are able to give it.

2

THE BIBLE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD

The Bible is also an understandable book. You can grasp its meaning and message. It is possible for you to become acquainted and familiar with what it says, and you can know for a certainty what God is saying to you through His word. Jesus said: "If you abide in My word, you are

My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). The way of salvation is not difficult to understand. It is easy to learn from the Bible what a sinner must do to become a Christian and what God then required of him to live the Christian life.

Misunderstanding the Bible is the result of being blinded by false doctrine which men teach. Listen to Jesus: "And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). "Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (II Corinthians 4:4). And some change and corrupt the gospel. "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8).

SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR CHILDREN

There is no real reason for misunderstanding the Bible, for even a child can know the will of God. "That from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15).

Some Facts To Help Understand

The Bible has two major divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew Language and the New Testament in Greek. It may help to understand the division of the Bible into these two sections by this simple drawing:

3

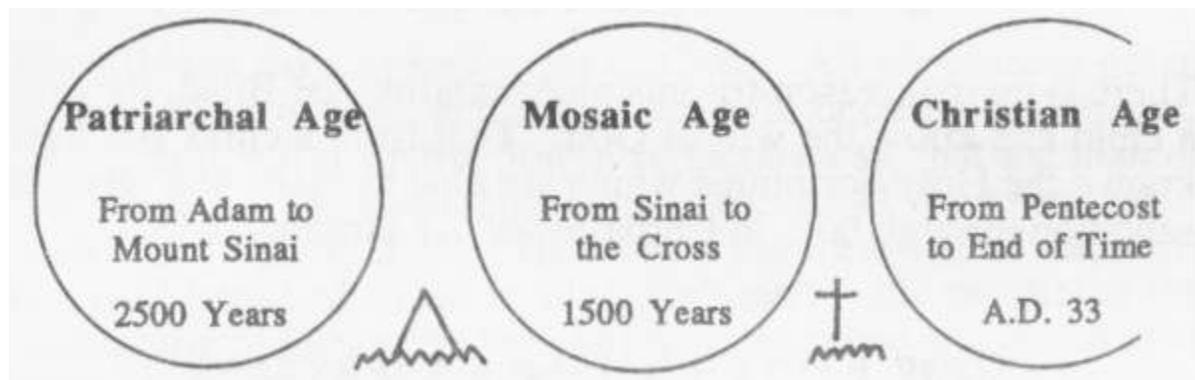


The Old Testament contains thirty-nine books. They begin with Genesis and close with Malachi. The kinds of writings in the Old Testament may be classified as: Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy.

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books. They begin with Matthew and close with Revelation. These books may be divided into these types of literature: Biography, History, Letters, and Prophecy. In the true sense, however, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John properly belong to the Old Testament because Jesus lived and died under the law of the Old Testament, and it lasted till He died on the cross. Here are two passages that explain those truths: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law ..." (Galatians 4:4-5). "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

THREE AGES OF BIBLE HISTORY

There have been three ages, or dispensations, of God's dealings in history with man. This diagram can help you understand about it:



The Patriarchal Age lasted about 2500 years, from Adam to Moses and the giving of the law from Mount Sinai (Leviticus 10; Deuteronomy 5). The Mosaic Age lasted for about 1000 years, from Moses to Christ and from the giving of the law at Mount Sinai to the cross of Christ. The Christian Age began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, fifty days after Jesus died on the cross and will last until Jesus comes again. About 2000 years have already passed.

MEANING OF PATRIARCHAL AGE

"Patriarchal" is a word which means "fathers." It was that period of time in the Bible when God dealt with people through the fathers who were the heads of families. As an example, God made covenants with his people through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:4-8). So, the religion of that period of time was a family religion.

MEANING OF MOSAIC AGE

There was a period in the Bible when God made covenants with a nation of people. "Moses called all Israel, and said, '... The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb [Sinai]. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive' " (Deuteronomy 5:1-3). Paul, many years later, asked: "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ..." (Galatians 3:19).

MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN AGE

While in the Patriarchal Age, God's teachings and dealings with man were through the heads of families; and under the Mosaic Age, God dealt with a nation of people; under the Christian Age, God deals with the whole world. His teaching, however, is for every individual. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

NOW MEN ARE UNDER THE NEW TESTAMENT

Laws and covenants under the Old Testament served the purpose God intended for them. And, when this was accomplished, they were abolished and the New Testament became effective. "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor." (Galatians 3:24-25). "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith' " (Galatians 3:11). "For if that first

covenant been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, the days

are coming ... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Hebrew 8:7-8).

Men today are under the New Testament. It has a better lawgiver, Christ; it has a more perfect sacrifice than the bulls and goats offered under the law, Christ; it has better promises, forgiveness of sins, and heaven at the end of this life. Read God's word with great care, believe it, obey it, and you will be permitted to spend eternity with God and all the redeemed in heaven.

6

GOD CALLED THEM CHRISTIANS

I had rather God would call me a Christian than anyone else. It is nice to have the love, respect, and confidence of brethren and friends. No higher compliment could be paid me than for those who know me to say: "He is a Christian." But for God to call a man a Christian is the most wonderful of all compliments. God called the disciples of Antioch Christians for the first time (Acts 11:26).

The prophet Isaiah said: "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. And you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name" (Isaiah 62:2). This was fulfilled in the New Testament in Acts 11:26: "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." The word for *called* in this passage is not the common word, but "in the New Testament it means, to utter a divine communication" (Thayer). So, these early disciples were called Christians by a divine utterance. God gave them this name.

The world has many standards by which it measures a Christian. You receive a great variety of answers when you ask, "Who is a Christian?" The world thinks that a man who is good morally is a Christian. Morality is important, but there were many good moral people before Christ came and died for man's sins. Others think that a man who is honest, upright, generous, and provides well for his own family is a Christian. While all of these things are commendable, and even necessary, they do not make one a Christian. In this study, we are interested in who is a Christian when we use the word of God alone as the measurement. Whom does God call a Christian? This is the all-important question!

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Who is really converted to Christ? Peter gives a full and satisfactory answer in the first chapter of his first letter:

1. One who is an **obedient** child of God. "As obedient children ..." (I Peter 1:14). The *Twentieth Century New Testament* renders this: "Be like obedient children." This refers to "obedience to God's saving will, or to the gospel. It consists

7

in believing in Christ and in following him in love" (Lenski). The expression *child of obedience* prompts three thoughts: authority, respect for that authority, and discipline. Behind obedience is authority and the word itself means "to give ear, hearken, listen to, submission." Peter is saying that a Christian is one who has respect for the authority of God, who listens to what he says and complies with what he commands. He is like a child in submission to, and dependent upon, his parents. One has not been converted to Christ who has not brought himself to this point of thought and conduct. He can be acceptable to God in nothing until he resigns his own will and surrenders himself without reservation to the will of Christ.

We are living in a time when in the home, the school, society, and the church there is a great poverty of this respect for God and His word.

The apostle is warning Christians that it would be a monstrous thing for children of obedience to go back and fashion themselves according to their former furious and wicked desires, which described the course of their conduct previous to their conversion to Christ. Do not lose sight of the fact that there was the possibility of their doing so. They could apostatize; there was the danger of their abandoning the faith, returning to the world, and fashioning themselves after their prior evil lusts and habits. Otherwise, the warning issued here would have been meaningless. The consequences of returning to the old castoff lusts are fully defined by the same writer in II Peter 2:20–22. It will help one's position none at all to plead that these people were never saved in the first place. But this verse says that had been called and had responded to that call of the gospel. "The call is always issued by means of the gospel which comes through those preaching the gospel" (I Peter 1:12—Lenski).

2. One who is **holy**. "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (I Peter 1:15). The word holy means "separate from the common, one who has been segregated from the world." The man who has been converted is one who has been called out of the world and lives a separate life from the world. Jesus does not wish him to be taken out of the world; he wants him to have association with the world that he might save it; but he does not want him to be any part of the evil that is in the world. "You are already clean because of the word

8

which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). *Sanctify* means "set apart, separate." So, when one, by God's word, has been made clean, separated from the world, and lives a segregated life, he is a Christian.

A Christian is one who believes in and practices segregation—not built upon race, color, language, education, or economics; but a segregation that distinguishes him from the world, and completely sets him apart from all wickedness and corruption. In every department of his life, his behavior is fashioned after God; his deportment is in the likeness of the life and example of Christ. In Christ, he is a new creature. His life is now dedicated in faithful service to the Savior. He is easily distinguished from the man of the world. A clear line of demarcation can be drawn between him and the man who still serves sin. If this is not true, then by God's standard, it can be determined that such a person has not been converted, and is not, therefore, a Christian.

3. One who **calls** upon God as his Father. "And if you call on the Father ..." (I Peter 1:17). Peter tells us in this verse who a Christian is. There are two truths apparent in this divine statement: One must have the right to call upon God as his Father, and he must exercise that right. Who actually has a right to call upon God as his Father? The answer is as simple as the question—the one who is in God's family. Only those who are children of God have the right to call Him Father. I have two children. They are in my family. Because they are my children, they have a just claim, by virtue of natural law, to call me their father. It would be a reflection upon me, upon my Christian character, for anyone who is not in my family to call me father.

Recently I visited in Haiti, and the children along the streets asked me for gifts of money. One surely thought he had an advantage and would strike a resonant chord in my heart by addressing me as his father. I had never seen him before; I did not beget him; he did not belong to my family.

No man has a right to call upon God as his Father who cannot produce evidence of his sonship. He can lay no just claim to this relationship and privilege unless through spiritual law he has come into the family of God. "Most assuredly, I say to you,

9

unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). This is a prohibitive statement—that is, it excludes from God's family all who have not been born again of water and of the Spirit. Are you in the family of God? You are not if you have not been born again. And if you have not been born again, you cannot call Him Father. You have not been converted; you are not a Christian.

But a Christian is one who, having that right, exercises it. Far too many have been baptized into Christ, and who are, therefore, in God's family, who have not availed themselves of the wonderful privilege of talking with the Father every day of their lives. A very timely question for each one of us to ask is: "Do I talk with the Father daily? Do I invoke his blessings and give thanks for his goodness to me?" If I repair to God's throne only in time of need or desperation, I lack this much measuring up to a Christian. Or, if I turn to Him only because of fear or repeated habit, I have missed the mark and do not measure up to His standard. What power and blessing in talking with the Father!

4. One who is a **sojourner**. "... conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear" (I Peter 1:17). A sojourner is a stranger, a pilgrim, a temporary resident in a foreign land. The idea in the word is *one who dwells beside*. It is a fleeting stay one spends in this life. Christians must not loiter on the way; they must press toward the mark. They are but visitants, colonists who will soon be called to the mother country. If truly Christian, our deepest affinities connect us with heaven, for our citizenship is there.

It is unfortunate that many Christians do not recognize that they are just pilgrims passing through this world. They get wonderfully attached

to it as though it were their home and have no wish to leave it. So involved in its affairs do some of them become, they would prefer to make it their permanent dwelling place. If asked, they may tell you that heaven is their home, but they are not homesick yet. Some have said: "Were the happiness of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicities of this, it were a martyrdom to live."

I once read this illustration: "two men may embark in one ship—the one full of good cheer as the ropes are loosed and the first turn of the screw begins to move her from the pier; the other

10

sad because he leaves all that is familiar and dear. The one is going home from exile; the other is being borne into banishment in a strange land, whose speech he does not know. Whose king he does not serve. Which will I be when death comes".

5. One who has been **redeemed in the blood** of Christ. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:18–19). *Redeem* comes from a word which means "to loose, set free, deliver for a ransom." Before conversion, we were slaves to a selfish life in which we lived for personal gratification, the free indulgence of our appetites and passions. In that day we conformed to the world with its attractions, its magnetic pull at our flesh and its pride. In that day we conformed to the customs and opinions around us, our object being wealth or fame; and we gave indulgence to every desire we wished to gratify. We were under the control and dominion of sin.

But Christ redeemed us. "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). "Who gave himself a ransom for all ..." (I Timothy 2:6). Formerly, we were sold into the bondage of Satan and were the slaves of sin, but Jesus came into the world and offered Himself as the ransom price that we might go free. He became our substitute to set us at liberty. In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, the first-born of both animals and men belonged to the Lord. They were to be sacrificed to Him. But God made provision that some animals and all men might be redeemed by the substitution of a suitable sacrifice. It was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins; so,

under the New Covenant, God offered His Son to become the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, once for all. A Christian is one who has availed himself of this offer to be redeemed and who has been made free and stands fast in that liberty which Christ purchased for him by His blood.

6. One who **believes** in God who raised Christ from the dead. "Who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (I Peter 1:21). Belief in God who raised Christ from the dead is fundamental to our being Christians. Many religious

11

leaders and teachers across the world assert that they believe in Christ. They believe that He was a great man—in fact the greatest who ever lived. We are told by them that Christ was the most wonderful teacher the world has ever known; that he formulated and gave to mankind the most wonderful philosophy and the highest system of ethics mankind has ever possessed. But in the same breath, they deny that he was raised from the dead—and all other miracles connected with His life.

No man is a Christian who does not believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. "Whom God raised up ..." (Acts 2:24). "And killed the prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, ..." (Acts 3:15). "... God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:26). "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:10). "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree" (Acts 5:30). "... It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Romans 4:24). "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

One's claim to be a Christian is a farce if he denies the resurrection of Christ. It is more than a farce; it is downright blasphemy.

Some years ago my family and I were passing through New York City. While there we had occasion to visit Riverside Church out by the Hudson, a magnificent structure of almost unbelievable beauty. In one group viewing the building, a man asked the guide: "What must one believe to be a member of this church?" The guide replied, "He does not have to believe anything." The one making the inquiry thought he had been misunderstood. So, he asked, "Do you not have to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" His response was immediate and very plain: "You do not have to believe anything. Sign this card and you are automatically constituted a member of the Riverside Church." But our standard of measurement is God's word and it unequivocally states that a Christian is one who believes that God raised Christ from the dead.

12

7. One who has **purified** his soul in obeying the truth. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth ..." (I Peter 1:22). There are three words to which we will give notice in this passage.

(a) *Obedience*: Again, the idea of hearing, listening, and being submissive is found in this word. It also shows personal responsibility. They had a part in bringing about their purification. "The apostles were never afraid of referring to human agency as having an important part in the saving of the soul. No one is made pure without personal intention or effort ... that is, your yielding to the requirements of truth, and to its fair influence on your mind, has been the means of your becoming pure" (Barnes).

(b) *Truth*: Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free " (John 8:32). Let it be observed and remembered that it is the truth, not error, by which men are made free. It is the truth by which men are purified. These passages state that men must know and obey the truth to be made free and to be purified. What Jesus and the apostles taught constitutes the truth, the record of which is found in the New Testament.

(c) *Purified*: This word describes the moral and spiritual state into which they entered when they obeyed and in which they are now continuing. They were purified in their obedience to the truth and they continue to be purified by their obedience.

8. One who has been **born again**. "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (I Peter 1:23). The term born again tells us that these people were born anew. They had been brought forth again. Their first birth had been fleshly; this one was spiritual. It has been effected by the planting of the incorruptible word of God in their hearts.

The new birth has often been presented as a mysterious, inexplicable process, beyond human grasp. But Peter explains what the new birth is and how it is brought about. He says that we have been redeemed in the blood of Christ. That is God's part. No one can redeem himself. The next step, Peter explains, is that we have purified our souls in obedience to the truth. This is

13

man's part. Redemption in the blood of Christ, and purification in obedience to the truth constitute the new birth; for it is the same verse that says, "Being born again ..." So, a Christian is one who has been born again of the living and abiding word, the gospel, which was preached to him.

9. One who enjoys the **hope** of an eternal inheritance. "To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4). When one becomes a Christian by being obedient to God's word and continues faithfully in the Christian life, he entertains a hope of a home in heaven. What a wonderful promise, what a sustaining expectation—an inheritance incorruptible, unstained, and unfading. The delight of it will never grow old. It will never lose any of its beauty and richness through sickness on our part or damage to itself. It will never be marred by impurity, but will be enjoyed by the redeemed in one eternal day of gladness.

14

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