

HAVE YOU HEARD? RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD REQUIRES PROPER BIBLE STUDY

by David R. Kenney

There are two extreme views about the study of the Bible. One is that the average person cannot understand the Scriptures without assistance of the elite, the scholars, or as some say, “the laity cannot understand the Scriptures without the clergy” even though the Bible does not have groups called “laity” or “clergy”. The other extreme is the Bible can be casually read and fully understood. The truth is between these two extremes—all can understand the Bible if they are willing to put forth the proper effort. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15, NKJV) To be diligent requires effort and the term “worker” further emphasizes this point. One has to make the proper effort to study the Bible to learn what God would have them do to be pleasing to God and saved at the last day. “Rightly dividing” means to handle aright, to teach the truth correctly which requires a proper method of study the Bible. Certainly God would expect us to be attentive to the words He gave for us to read and know!

A Bible student must recognize three periods in which God dealt with man in the Bible. The first period was the Patriarchal (God dealt with the head of the family), then the Mosaic (when God gave the law to Moses and the Israelites) and now the Christian (when God’s Son established the new covenant for all). The New Testament is the law we will be judged by today. Some mistakenly mix these covenants up and bring practices from old covenants into the new covenant. These are different covenants, not addendums or amendments to a prior covenant. Proper study of the Bible keeps these covenants and the ordinances which go with them in proper perspective. Additionally, one must have a logical approach to the Scriptures recognizing there are commands to be obeyed, examples to be followed (or avoided depending on the context), and implications that show us how we should worship God and conduct our lives. One neglected principle of handling the word aright is respecting the silence of the Scriptures. Some think that if the Bible does not say we cannot do an action then we are permitted to do that action, but we should be looking in the Bible for the command, example, or implication that we can do an action. In other words, when someone says “The Bible does not say I cannot do this,” they are missing the mark. The proper question is “Where in the Bible does it authorize you to do this?” Think how long the Bible would be if God had to tell us each and every action we were not permitted to do!

All of us should be working to study the Bible so we can present ourselves approved to God.

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