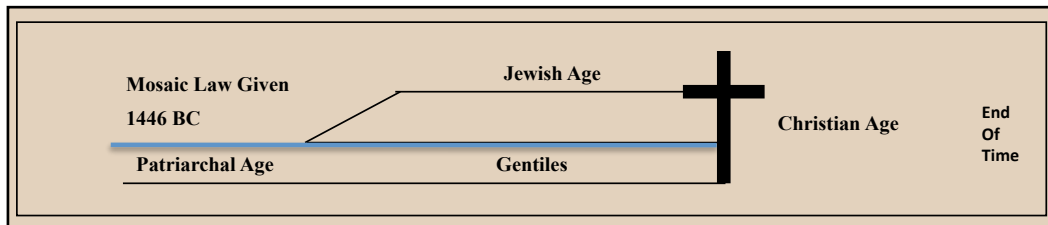


RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The entire Bible is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17), but the entire Bible is not applicable to us. For example we are not commanded to build an ark or to offer animal sacrifices. Unless we understand this important principle, we'll never make sense of the Word of God.

To properly understand the Bible, one must understand that there are three dispensations or time periods in the Bible.



The Patriarchal Period

The first time period is commonly called the patriarchal period. It began at creation and ended for the Jews when the Law was given at Mt. Sinai some 1446 years before the coming of Christ.

Family worship, animal sacrifices and a time when God spoke to the heads of households characterized this period.

The Mosaic Period

The Mosaic Period began with the giving of the law through Moses about 1446 years before Christ. It was a law that was given to the nation of Israel and them alone (Deut. 5:1-3).

This period was characterized by the offering of animal sacrifices, circumcision, tabernacle worship, and the priesthood.

The law's purpose was to (1) teach Israel the meaning of sin (Rom. 3:20) (2) prepare them for the coming of Jesus (Gal. 3:19, 24).

Jesus fulfilled or completed the Law of Moses when he died upon the cross. Paul says in Col. 2:14, “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.”

Although the Law of Moses is not binding upon us today, it should be studied for the following reasons:

- There are many prophecies that point to Jesus (Jno. 5:39; Lk. 24:26).
- Its history is our only reliable source of knowledge about creation and the early history of man.
- It tells us how God dealt with mankind.
- Its events are examples to us (I Cor. 10:6, Rom. 15:4).

The Period Between

The period between the ending of the Law of Moses and the beginning of the Christian Period or Pentecost was a period of reassurance. During this period, Jesus gave proof that he had been physically resurrected from the grave (Jno. 20:21-31). He told the apostles to wait at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5-8). And He gave them the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16).

The Christian Period

The Christian period began on Pentecost in 33 AD and will end when Christ returns again. This is the most important period for us because this is the period in which we live.

It is a period that is characterized by new things. We have:

- A new covenant (Heb. 8:8-13)
- A new birth (Jno. 3:3-5)
- A new name (Acts 11:26)
- A new worship (Acts 2:42)
- And new promises (Heb. 8: 6; 1 Jno. 2:25).

—Robert C. Archer