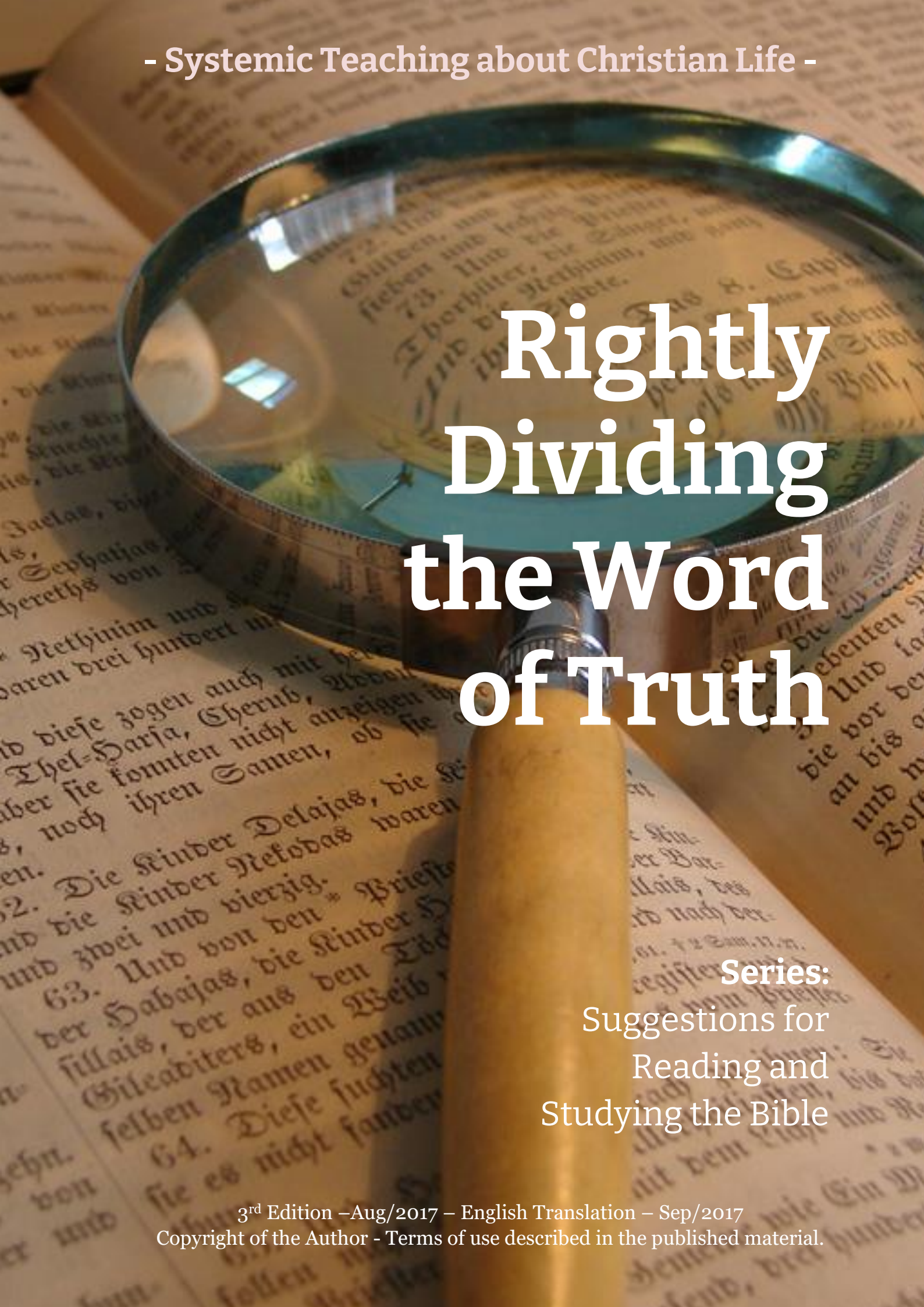


- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Series:
Suggestions for
Reading and
Studying the Bible

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General Considerations about Using This Material:

The subject presented in this material aims to provide support to knowledge and an in-depth study of the Bible and the Christian life.

Based on the understanding that in the Christian Bible is contained the consolidation of fundamental and formal records of the writings inspired by God for humanity and each person of it, the contents exposed in this material are not intended to add, ever, anything to the Bible, nor ever remove anything from it. The aim through this subject is to contribute to the exploration of what already was registered and passed on to us over thousands of years of history by the One Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

The contents presented on the next pages, of course, intend to address just a portion of the essential themes of life displayed with such great amplitude in the Bible. On the other hand, however, this subject is presented in a grouped, colligated, organized and systematized manner with the objective to serve as an aid to knowledge and understanding of the Christian life without losing sight of the main aspects of it.

Ecclesiastes 12: 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

Related words put together, as told in the biblical text above, serve as goads and nails for fixing supports and help for the life of people that hear and receive them. Therefore, one objective of this material is to study and seek a broader understanding of the truths handed down to us by the Unique Pastor and God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

We would still like to suggest that the reading and studying of this material also should always be accompanied by prudence and proper investigation, believing that this is a very healthy habit to be practiced toward any material presented to a person.

The act of acceptance, rejection, or “retaining what is good,” is a personal and individual attribute given to those who receive the wisdom from God and which should be exercised or used by them toward all that comes into their hands.

Proverbs 8: 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion.

Acts 17: 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Proverbs 16: 1 The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.

3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

Ronald Gortz and Irmelin Gortz, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!

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*Revelation 21: 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."
6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

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*1Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

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C1. The Word of Truth and the Need to Approach It Under Appropriate Criteria

Following up on the first subject of the series Suggestions for Reading and Studying the Bible, named History Told by the Father of All Sons and Daughters, this new material also intends to present relevant considerations that aim to contribute to the enrichment of people's manners of interacting with the texts of the Bible Scriptures, as well as collaborate for them to seek a more effective, intense, frequent, and in-depth relationship with the written Word that God, the Creator of Heavens and Earth, left recorded to humanity.

Referring again to the aforementioned subject, which may also serve as a complement to some of the topics described in this new material, we point out once more that one of the aspects briefly evidenced in it refers to the point that the texts of the Bible are also denominated in the Scriptures as The “Word of God,” a characteristic of which results a series of other relevant and indispensable derivations to be considered and understood in relation to the same Biblical Scriptures.

To relate with the biblical texts in the sense that they are an expression of the “Word of God,” in turn, according to the same Scriptures, also implies in the consideration or acknowledgment that these texts are recorded in conformity with the characteristics of God Himself, Who, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, granted them to people to record them in a written form.

Thus, as a consequence of recognizing and considering that the Biblical Scriptures are an expression of the “Word of God in conformity with the God who granted them to humanity,” it becomes equally essential to observe that one of the fundamental characteristics in relation to God, also in regard to His Scriptures, is that He is the Lord who expresses Himself only in truth, as exemplified below:

Numbers 23: 19 ***“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”***

Still, in other texts of the Scriptures, God's truthfulness can also be observed in the narratives that expose, in them, some essential characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ, as follows:

John 1: 14 ***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***

John 14: 6 ***Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.***

God is not a liar under any circumstances; on the contrary, God is the God of truth, expressed as such also in His Son Jesus Christ. An aspect that shows the reason or foundation by which the Scriptures also receive the nomination as the “Word of Truth,” as also follows exemplified below:

*John 17: 17 “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”***

*Ephesians 1: 13 **In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.***

So, as one more example, when the written “Word of God,” that He addressed to humanity, announces that God created the Heavens and the Earth and everything in them, it is because this is the Creator's truth about these facts.

Similarly, when the “Word of God” or the “Word of Truth” announces that there will be eternal life for those who receive Christ as Lord in their hearts, this is as true as the fact that God created the Heavens and the Earth and all that is in them, and that nothing can frustrate God's plans.

*Psalms 135: 6 **Whatever the LORD pleases He does, In heaven and in earth, In the seas and in all deep places.***

*Job 42: 2 “**I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You.**”*

Additionally, the fact that human beings announce false reports and pronounce statements contrary to the “Word of Truth” does not change the truth. Attitudes contrary to the “Word of Truth” may affect people's relationship with the truth, but the “Word of Truth” will forever prevail by the fact that it is the expression of truth.

*2Corinthians 13: 8 **For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.***

*Isaiah 40: 8 **The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.***

Even that which is grounded in the distortion of truth, in due time, will also end up cooperating with the evidence of the “Word of Truth,” because after the outcome of the facts, that which is false will also have its false foundation exposed, making even more distinct that which is actually true.

Moreover, still in accordance with the Scriptures, **not only will the “Word of Truth” remain forever, but also all of them who keep it in their life, thereby obtaining, as a final result, the enjoyment of the eternal benefit that the “Word of Truth” promises and produces.**

*John 8: 51 **“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”***

The “Word of Truth” is a source that manifests the way of redemption, salvation, and life for the present and for eternity, which is why the Lord calls each person to receive it in his or her heart and to relate personally to it.

However, regarding the point described in the last paragraphs above, and as already mentioned in the subject named History Told by the Father of All Sons and Daughters, we understand that it is useful to stress again, through this new theme, that **the fact that the Scriptures are also the expression of the “Word of Truth” does not automatically imply the assertion that each of its parts of the truth should be applied to the lives of its readers without proper discernment or that a person's relationship with the “Word of Truth” does not require an approach performed with an appropriate wisdom and sobriety.**

Just as there are many tools in the world that have high potential for usefulness in people's lives, but which require proper handling so that one can obtain the desired benefit from them, and even for a person not to expose oneself to possible damages by using them in an improper manner, so also occurs regarding several aspects of an individual's relationship with the “Word of Truth”.

Although the Scriptures are a true expression of God's revelation to humankind, and therefore worthy of all acceptance as the expression of truth, the Lord calls people to relate to the “Word of Truth” with sobriety and with a growing learning of an adequate handling of their content. An attitude which, certainly, will need to be associated with a knowledge of the various groups or main parts of the Scriptures, but also with a knowledge of a global view of the general purpose of the Lord expressed in them.

Therefore, in addition to emphasizing the fact that the “Word of God” also carries the attribute of “Word of Truth,” in this current subject we intend to present reflections, based on texts exposed in the Scriptures themselves, about the importance for a person to pay attention, during the reading and learning of this “Word of Truth,” to the specific characteristics of some parts of the biblical writings. And this, so that an appropriate distinction between the various parts of the Scriptures may be known and perceived according to the purpose by which they were instructed by the Lord to be recorded.

The Bible's own texts teach specific aspects about an appropriate relationship with the Scriptures, aiming that a person may perform this practice under a wise perception of the “Word of Truth” in its various and distinct parts, as well as for one to keep, constantly, this perception as an essential point for this relationship. An aspect which has come to constitute one of the reasons for the title of this subject and the next chapters.

C2. The Essential Position of Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth for a Good Relationship with the Scriptures

There are many people who speak about the high relevance of interacting with the Word of God, but a major portion of these same individuals who announce the importance of doing so, do not actually practice the reading of the Scriptures frequently and also do not meditate on the Word of Truth most of the time of their lives.

And in relation to this detachment referred to in the previous paragraph, it has seemed to us that one of the points that have led many people to abstain from the Word of Truth in their daily practices is the difficulty they encounter in harmonizing some major parts of the own Scriptures, and that seemingly do not present a uniform application for their lives.

Nevertheless, the aspect of the apparent contradiction among the various parts of the Word of Truth, particularly regarding the instructions for a Christian life, should not be seen as an obstacle to the relationship with the written Word of God. And this, because what appears to many to be antagonistic or opposing in the Scriptures, in many situations only expresses the non-perception, of the ones who observe them, of a different exposition of similar instructions and of the same and uniform purposes of the Lord, described, however, from a different circumstance, angle, or point of view.

The fact that the Scriptures present the uniform purposes of God, but from the description of different circumstances or optics, is yet another characteristic that shows the breadth, comprehensiveness, and one of the fundamental or essential facets of them. This characteristic demonstrates that the written Word of God contemplates both the aspects that were placed there for them to be followed and others that have been recorded or exemplified precisely for the purpose to show what is better to be avoided.

The complete set of Scriptures, in its diversity of approaches and exemplifications, forms a broad compendium that aims to instruct the reader to a greater understanding of the diverse facets of life, as well as to broaden one's discernment of what, before God, is or is not appropriate to be followed or practiced.

So, when the Scriptures present narratives in which people have adopted misconduct regarding God's will, they are not narrating them so that their readers may also practice them or that they have only a historical knowledge of them. On the contrary, those narratives serve as teaching for the readers so that they may no longer be repeated or practiced, as we find exemplified below:

1Corinthians 10: 11 **Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**

Hebrews 12: 16 **... lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.**

The fact that the Scriptures present the harmony among various aspects, as well as the contrariness among others, should not keep people from the reading or the relationship with the Word of Truth, because they are written so that their readers know that there are behaviors that will never harmonize with each other in the daily life in the present world.

The Word of Truth aims to cooperate in the preparation of people so that they can soberly and wisely discern the situations of life with which they may come to face and that so they can choose what, before God, is good for them, but also so that they equally know to reject what in the eyes of the Lord is inappropriate or harmful for them.

Therefore, the ability to know, to perceive and to recognize how to divide the main groups of the Scriptures is crucial to a good or proper relationship with the Word of Truth.

Thus, for further deepening the knowledge and perception of the various parts of the Word of Truth, we suggest a good observation of the next biblical text set forth below. A text inspired by God and written by Paul to a man named Timothy, a young person who, despite having a deep desire to live a life according to the will of God, also needed, as every Christian needs, to be instructed on how to present himself before God and how to relate to the Scriptures that the Lord has granted access:

2 Timothy 2: 15 ***Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.***

Returning once again to the text above, we would like to suggest at this moment, in particular, a greater attention to the final part of it that says: “***rightly dividing the word of truth.***”

Although the written “Word of Truth” expresses the “Truth” in the whole set of its contents, Christians are not called to handle it in any way or by making a reading of it without criteria or wisdom. Christians are called, by the Lord Himself, to do it appropriately, “***handling the Word of Truth well or making good use of it,***” as it is expressed in other translations, like in Portuguese or Spanish for instance, which are also exposed below:

Timóteo 2: 15 ***Procura apresentar-te a Deus aprovado, como obreiro que não tem de que se envergonhar, que maneja bem a palavra da verdade.*** (RA)

2 Timoteo 2: 15 ***Procura con diligencia presentarte a Dios aprobado, como obrero que no tiene de qué avergonzarse, que usa bien la palabra de verdad.*** (RVR95)

What, however, would be covered in this call for “*a more appropriate handling or well use of the Word of Truth*”?

Responding, in part, to the previous question, and aiming to obtain a more accurate and detailed knowledge regarding what “*a proper handling of the Word of Truth*” is referring to, we understand that it is useful to observe the same text in yet in other languages, through which, like in the English translation, it can be seen that **the verb “to handle or to use well” is not related to the act of seeking for mere informative knowledge of the contents of the Scriptures, but that it is related to the ability to correctly or rightly divide the Word of Truth in its different parts and according to the purpose for which those parts were recorded in the Scriptures.**

So, to exemplify the above, another reference which shows that **the “*proper handling*” has as its essential characteristic “*the ability to rightly divide the Word of Truth*”** is the translation of Martin Luther into German, as also follows below:

2 Timotheus 2: 15 ***Befleißige dich, Gott dich zu erzeugen als einen rechtschaffenen und unsträflichen Arbeiter, der da recht teile das Wort der Wahrheit.*** (LUT)

When a more profound inquiry into the text of 2Timothy in reference is made, it may be noted that **the idea of “*a proper maneuver of the Word of Truth*” is not related to the ability to know many passages of the Bible, to know how to quote many verses of it, or to be agile in locating texts along of its recorded pages, but, yes, “*to know how to properly divide the Scriptures according to their proper parts*” or “*to make suitable division of the Word of Truth.*”**

The expression in German “*der da Recht teile*” is related to the one who “*rightly divides the Word of Truth into their due parts,*” and is also accompanied by the English expression “***rightly dividing,***” which refers to “*the action of dividing the parts of the Word of Truth in a fair, just or appropriate manner.*”

On the other hand, “***rightly dividing the Word of Truth***” **does not mean that a person is allowed to relativize the truth or just discard what he or she does not like or is not comfortable with. On the contrary, a good separation or parting of the Scriptures is precisely to do it in a correct and impartial manner, recognizing the teachings of what is appropriate before the Lord, as well as identifying the instructions that make it possible to perceive conducts that are contrary to the will of the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Bible contains many themes and addresses the most varied areas of life, covering in fact instructions for all facets necessary to human life. And even though the Scriptures do not deal with the smallest details of many specific subjects, such as the description of the most diverse human professions, they contain the instructions that teach about the way through which a person can relate to the Eternal Lord to be instructed by Him to act according to the will of God for one’s life and also in this diversity of professions.

Nevertheless, reiterating once again what has been quoted in the subject named History Told by the Father of All Sons and Daughters, **what is contained in the**

Scriptures, or in the written “Word of Truth,” was not granted to be blindly followed and to be applied indiscriminately at all epochs and locals, which is why “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” is so essential.

In the Bible, among its writings, narratives are presented of the most diverse human choices in the course of their lives over the years and centuries, both the right and also the inappropriate ones. These narratives are outlined in it to serve as an example to future generations so that they may repeat, in their contexts, those aspects that were right before the will of God or to make different choices from those that their ancestors did and that were not according to the will of the Eternal Lord.

The Bible, besides being a compendium of instructions and principles of life that the Lord wants everyone to adopt in life, is also as a legacy of accumulated records that God left to the people on the right and on the improper choices that the ancestors of them have done in their generations, as well as several consequences that they harvested from them.

A “well handling or maneuvering of the Word of Truth,” that is, a “right division of the Word of Truth,” is endowed, then, with the ability to perceive those parts of the Scriptures that point to the virtues to be followed by every human being, but equally with the ability to recognize those parts that refer to the records of words and conducts contrary to God's will, and which, therefore, should no longer be practiced by those to whom the several parts of the “Word of Truth” have already been made available, as the very “Word of Truth” also warns in the following text:

*1 Corinthians 10: 6 **Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.***

As humanity went through the centuries, God was making sure that what was essential for the knowledge of future generations was truly recorded also in the form of human writings, so that the indispensable aspects of this history, both positive and negative, were duly written over the years and centuries.

The whole set of writings of the Word of Truth, the set that faithfully and truthfully explains the right decisions and wrong decisions of many people, plus God-given guidelines and principles of life for humanity, is another central aspect that manifest the Bible as a unique work, so splendid and of incalculable value, as it also is expressed in its Psalms and Songs:

*Psalms 19: 9 **The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.***
*10 **More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.***
*11 **Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.***

A work of such great value as the Scriptures granted by the Eternal Lord, a jewel of inestimable and incomparable value, in turn, must be handled

with zeal, with respect, and with the wisdom that God bestows upon those who seek it in Him.

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to point out that the above references to handling the Word of Truth wisely should also not be used by a person to incur the wrong thought that the word of God is for few individuals or for those who have a privileged natural intelligence.

The Bible, in no way, presents the call to handle the Word of Truth well as a privilege that God desires to bestow only on few or wise persons according to human eyes. On the contrary, God asserts, in the Scriptures themselves, that He makes them understandable to the simple and to those who seek the Lord with a humble and broken heart.

Psalms 19: 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

The reading and studying of the Bible are more than just reading “another book” of human literature. **To learn to do a right division of the Word of Truth, or how to identify well the parts of the Scriptures, it is necessary to do the reading and studying of the Bible a constant and growing project of relationship with its texts and, in particular, with the Lord Who has granted them. For the Word of Truth cannot be discerned just according to the natural ability of humankind, but in accordance with the instruction of the Spirit of the Lord.**

1 Corinthians 2: 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

For every new stage of life that a person lives, the Word of God shows itself renewed and more comprehensive, once it presents teachings for all, including principles or instructions for children, young, adults, elderly, and even about the eternal life that follows the life after this present world.

Psalms 119: 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Moreover, to help us understand the “Word of Truth” at every stage of life, God provided the best instructor we could ever have. The Lord has placed His Holy Spirit at our disposal so that, at any time and location, we can access Him to be guided, also by Him, in truth to and through the “Word of Truth.”

John 14: 26 **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

John 16: 13 **However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**

Therefore, the first objective of this subject is to contribute with an awakening in readers about the need to grow in the obtaining and use of this good handling of the Word of God, in order to know how to divide it properly according to the purposes of the Eternal Lord. However, this subject equally has the aim to contribute that people may get aware that the fulfillment of the task in reference also demands a living relationship with the Lord to obtain the wisdom that only from above is granted to a human being.

Once again, we remember that not observing the major divisions of the Word of Truth can bring painful and even destructive consequences for those who do not consider this fact. An attitude that may result in a not right relationship of a person with the Word of Truth and which ends bringing misfortunes to him or her instead of the life and blessing for which God granted the Scriptures.

The interaction of a person with the Word of Truth, according to God's instruction, results in life from the heavenly kingdom and priceless treasures. However, for this, it is necessary for a person to be instructed by the Lord to recognize what has been appointed by Him to be followed or practiced, as well as what has been registered in Scriptures to grant the understanding so that it is not to be accepted, followed, or practiced.

Hebrews 5: 14 **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

C3. Summarized Examples of the Need of the Adequate Division of the Word of Truth

As already mentioned in the preceding chapters, the primary purpose of this particular theme is not to expand much the subject on “rightly dividing the written Word of God” in itself, but to contribute to a greater awakening of the readers to pay attention to this need, being a wider exposition on the diverse “divisions of the Word of Truth” demonstrated more extensively in all subjects of the Systemic Teaching about the Christian Life.

On the other hand, yet at this beginning of the series of subjects on the Bible, it seems important to us to present at least the exemplification of some cases in which an adequate division of the Word of Truth is essential. And this, with the purpose to previously demonstrate, through them, the relevance and particular need of the understanding of this vital principle so that a more appropriate approximation of the Scriptures may be accomplished, as follows:

Example 1:

The Bible, as also mentioned earlier, is a compendium which sets forth the record of many facts and relationships of human beings with God, of people among themselves, of human beings with the material world and also with the spiritual world. And one of its stories, in which a wide range of these relationships is contained, is the narrative of a man of antiquity that has been reported in a biblical book that also bears his name, which is the book of “Job.” Some commentators even consider the possibility that this particular book is, chronologically, the oldest writing of the Bible.

And so, without going into many of the minor details of the account in reference, which can be read in full in the Bible itself, we want to take a closer look at some global aspects of this narrative, pointing out that it is only at the end of this book's records that there are described some factors that determine essential aspects for a more precise understanding of the whole book.

So to speak, a part of the “right division of the words of the book of Job” can only begin to be constructed, in fact, from the reading of the entire book of Job. Only from the reading of the book until its end that a more appropriate division of its accounts can be made.

In the middle parts of the narrative of the story in reference, for instance, it can be seen that Job undergoes terrible sufferings, and, because of this, some of his closest acquaintances come to him with the announcement of an intention to comfort and advise him.

Nevertheless, observing a “right division of the Scriptures of the book of Job,” it is only at the end of the book of Job that it may be seen that God rebukes three of Job's four acquaintances who visited him. The Lord did it because the words of these three men were not right in what they said about God Himself, causing that their words, therefore, should not be a reference for instructions that a person, also in our days, should consider following in his or her life.

Below, then, follows a mention of one of the final portions of the book of Job that relates directly to the fact exposed in the previous paragraph:

Job 42: 7 And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

In the above verse, it may be noted that it contains an extremely relevant information for a correct handling or division of the book of Job, and without which this right division can be greatly impaired.

In the book in reference, there are significant numbers of chapters that chronicle the several words of the three acquaintances of Job and which the Lord later rebuked. In all the dialogues of these three acquaintances with Job, God was one of the characters constantly quoted in their conversations, but the Lord's evaluation of the content of these dialogues is only described at the end of the book of Job.

The information at the end of Job's book makes it clear that in the reading of its content it is necessary to keep in mind that what Job's three acquaintances spoke about God, and about Job's relationship with God, was not right in the eyes of the Lord in its essential or fundamental aspects.

From the accounts of these three acquaintances of Job can be extracted, therefore, the fact that people say words about God as if the Lord agreed with them, but words that are not necessarily truths about God or are not instructions given by the Lord. And God Himself rebuked Job's acquaintances, saying that they did not speak straight, righteous, or correct declarations about the Lord.

With this in mind, as an example of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," it is imperative to know that before anyone refers to a text of the book of Job, it is also necessary to check first who has uttered the words of that reference. And depending on the content of the sentences and from whom they come from, they may exactly be part of what people say about God, but what is not straight in the eyes of the Eternal Lord.

The texts of Job's book are like a dialogue that was recorded and then transcribed into a written narrative of the conversation. They are the description, according to the Lord, of what the people and God actually said about that occurrence, even though many of the words spoken by Job's acquaintances did not express what was right concerning the Lord Himself or before the Lord.

What we are trying to warn with this first example, is that although the Bible contains eternal truths and which overcome the mere human knowledge, the Scriptures also need to be read in the simplicity of the one who sees common sense or the commonplace descriptions of dialogues and human behavior that are narrated in them.

The description of Job's history, even though it contains very rich and profound truths, and even humanly difficult to fathom, is also, at the same time, the record of the narrative of a dialogue with various characters from ordinary life, where some people played roles that were consonant with the will of God, while others played roles that were contrary, as it happens in all the epochs of human life on Earth.

Thus, **the work of "rightly dividing the word of God" is, at the same time, an unattainable task without the help of the Holy Spirit of God, but it is also, on the other hand, a common task that should be carried out in**

simplicity and under the inquiries that should be practiced in the analysis of the most diverse information that persons receive in their daily life.

When an individual tells a fact, do not people often question him or her by asking questions similar to these: Who even said that? For what purpose did he or she say it? What has been narrated, is it reliable or grounded in the truth?

Therefore, to check the source of information to evaluate it better should be something normal and usual in people's lives, as well as simple questions, and in some ways "obvious," should never be ignored or stopped to be formulated even in the reading of the Bible and despite that the Scriptures are the expression of the Word of God or the Word of Truth.

Who told you the fact in question? To whom did he or she tell it? In what situation did the event occur? What has also been narrated applies equally to listeners of the present days? These, and many other questions that adults and experienced people already should have learned to practice, should be part of their conversations in general, as well as they should be an integral part of their reading and studying of the Scriptures.

Still, we would like to point out here also that a wise investigation of information and narratives comprises more than the mere accumulation of knowledge. The simple fact that a person has or does not have, for example, a college degree, respectively, does not give one any guarantees and does not automatically disqualify an individual for a proper evaluation of information that is addressed to him or her.

There are many simple people on the subject of formal educational instruction, but who have learned valuable practices for evaluation of the situations of life and for asking wise questions, while there are also many people with an extensive formal education and who yet have not developed the ability to ask obvious and straightforward things that would be of great discernment, benefit, and protection to them.

Thus, since God said that three of Job's four acquaintances did not speak right things about the Lord Himself, what these three colleagues uttered requires a special investigation in studying and reading the Bible, because the words of them, although reported in truth by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, contain subtle aspects that oppose truths about the Unique Eternal Lord.

The words of Job's three acquaintances are an example of the importance of knowing how to rightly divide the Word of Truth, which contains, for instance and warning, also the description of many things opposed to the Lord that people have actually said and which, similarly, they continue also to utter in the present days.

In this way, the words that are recorded in the Scriptures, and that are manifested by God as opposed to Him and His will, also serve as instructions for us to know how to filter out words similar to those spoken to us in contemporary times, even if they are spoken by friends or people who are near.

So, still continuing with the same example of the book in reference, follows, then, below, a short passage by one of Job's three acquaintances, called Zophar, who uttered, like the other two, words that seemingly were beneficial, but which contain a grave deviation in their content and which need to be discerned also in the light of a right discernment of other parts of the Word of Truth:

Job 11: 13 "If you would prepare your heart, And stretch out your hands toward Him;
14 If iniquity were in your hand, and you put it far away, And would not let wickedness dwell in your tents;
15 Then surely you could lift up your face without spot; Yes, you could be steadfast, and not fear;
16 Because you would forget your misery, And remember it as waters that have passed away,
17 And your life would be brighter than noonday. Though you were dark, you would be like the morning.
18 And you would be secure, because there is hope; Yes, you would dig around you, and take your rest in safety.
19 You would also lie down, and no one would make you afraid; Yes, many would court your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail, And they shall not escape, And their hope—loss of life!"

The words of the last text above may even appear to be beautiful and beneficial, but they are extremely contrary to the essence of the teaching of God's will throughout the Word of Truth. Zophar, in his speech, proposed to Job that the restoration of his life depended on Job's own "good deeds." Zophar spoke as if the liberation of an individual from his iniquity depended primarily on human effort and disposition.

Zophar proposed words or ideas, if they are seen without a sharper discernment, which may induce people to a grave error of thoughts about what the human beings may have about themselves, and consequently, also about what they may think about the Eternal Lord.

If human, following the proposition of Zophar's words, could be able to be delivered from their iniquities by means of their own so-called "good works," their liberation would have their own conduct as its foundation, what would, however, result in the fact that all the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross would be unnecessary and that God would have provided in vain the salvation of human beings in Christ Jesus.

Now, however, in opposition to the proposition of Zophar's words, let us see what other parts of the Word of Truth have to say about the postures suggested by Zophar to Job:

Colossians 2: 20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations,
21 "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"
22 which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men?
23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Galatians 2:16 **Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.**

Zophar, in his statements, was advising Job to rely on personal works to justify himself before God. The confidence in his own works, however, would just assure more effort and weariness to Job. A practice which, in the end, could not truly justify him and would only intensify the deception and his anguish, postponing the meeting of Job with true salvation.

Thus, this example of Zophar's words shows us how essential it is to have adequate evaluation criteria for reading and studying the Word of Truth.

It is “true” that there is a huge contingent of people in all generations who, in a similar way, seek to attest what Zophar said. However, it is also “truth,” according to the Word of Truth, that Zophar's sayings have already been declared or stated by God as not being in line with His eternal will in Christ Jesus for humans.

Therefore, Zophar's words were not written down in the Scriptures for people to adopt them as a practice in their lives, but because in each generation re-emerge those who declare, similarly to Zophar, their defense or pretext to human works as to appease the moments of crisis, as if God grants eternal salvation through human endeavor in the attempt to reach it. Zophar's words are recorded in the Scriptures so that the judgment of God clearly manifests them, and similar to them, as contrary or in opposition to the will of the heavenly kingdom.

And just as God helped Job to discern what was according to His will, as well as what was contrary to it, so the Lord continues to watch over His Word and to properly instruct those who seek Him and long for His truth.

Ephesians 2: 8 **For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

Example 2:

Yet another example of the need for “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” that we would like to mention at this point is found in a text recorded in the letter of Paul, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, addressed to the Christians of Rome at the time of the Roman Empire. This example, even written centuries after the book of Job, also deals with a subject similar to the content proposed by Zophar to Job.

In this letter of Romans in reference, without going here into further general details about it, we find a short sentence written by Paul which also shows, in a very objective way, the need to understand distinct parts of the Lord's Scriptures. However, despite short, it is a sentence of HUGE implication for a “right division of the Word of Truth.”

Among so many other things that are narrated in Paul's letter in reference, beginning with the creation of human beings and their most current attitudes in history toward God, there is in it a verse that reports a positioning in which a person may be found, and that also may affect significantly the way of how people read and study the Bible, as follows:

*Romans 3: 19 **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.***

*20 **Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

Still, here, before proceeding further, we suggest once again to read the last text above to observe that in it Paul is making a mention of a differentiation of parts contained in the same Scriptures of the Lord, clearly indicating the need for an understanding of the purpose of the distinct parts of the Scriptures.

One of the points that can be observed in the book of Romans, regarding this second example in reference, is that **the so-called “law,” to which Paul refers, has a restricted direction and points out only to a particular group of people, although the fact that this same “law” is also recorded in the Scriptures.**

“Whatever the law says,” it says “to those who are under the law” is an expression that implies in evidence that the law, referred to by Paul, does not necessarily have a global extension or a dominion over all individuals on Earth.

Thus, in order to accomplish a “right division of the Word of Truth,” it will be necessary, previously, to elucidate some questions, such as:

- ⇒ Who are they that are under the law or that want to be under the law?
- ⇒ Am I also among those who are under this law?
- ⇒ If someone is under the law, is it because he or she wants to be under it? And yet, can anyone not be under this law or choose and desire not to be under this law?
- ⇒ And after all, what law is this to which Paul is referring?

Without going into many details, we see that chapter 3 of Romans narrates about considerations of a position of life according to the Jewish precepts of those days, which orientates us to the fact that it was to the so-called “Law of Moses” that the context of Paul's letter was referencing.

The Law of Moses, in turn, was composed of hundreds of verses that are recorded in the Christian Bible itself. Could this law, then, does not have the purpose of being applied to all people who read the Bible? Could it be the case that so many writings were recorded in the Scriptures and not necessarily with the aim to be applied to all people who want to walk in the will of God?

The practice of making questions like the last ones presented above is of utmost importance to an appropriate relationship with the Scriptures, for the answer to them may determine for which kind of regiments of life a person will make his or her choice and to which one will be subjecting his or her existence.

Therefore, **to differentiate the distinct types of law exposed in the Scriptures, and which an individual may choose to follow or reject, is one of the most important aspects of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” and to which each person should constantly be attentive or vigilant.**

This topic described in the preceding paragraph, certainly, deserves to be much more widely explored. However, to keep focusing on the first place on the “awakening to the importance of rightly dividing of the Word of Truth,” we intend to restrict ourselves here to a general approach, but that, at the same time, encompasses a broad and profound meaning.

That said, it may be noted that in the same letter addressed to the beloved of God of Rome, Paul also makes another statement which elucidates many aspects of the questions made above, or similar to them, as follows:

Romans 6: 14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**

And still further, through the same set of writings of Paul, God clearly announces:

Romans 10: 4 **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

What a great and significant implications that the above statements can cause in the life of those who are attentive to them.

As strange as it may sound, Paul, inspired by God, was declaring, through the letter to the Christians in Rome, a “Word of God” which teaches that to be a follower of Christ, in accordance with the will of the Heavenly Father, it is also necessary to observe that not all content that is in the Bible is written to be followed by those who have made a choice for a life in the Lord.

The Law of Moses, for instance, conflicts with the life under the fundamental principles of the Heavenly Grace, and because of this, it needs to be discerned and seen under the right division of the Word of the Lord and the purpose for which this law was recorded in the Scriptures.

The events of Christ's life in the flesh on Earth had a profound impact on the understanding of many of the writings of the Bible itself, making evident the obsolescence of some of them as to the need to be followed by those who have attained grace in the Lord.

Therefore, from the work of Christ Jesus in the flesh on Earth, the descriptions of the texts regarding the instructions that were evidenced as obsolete began to serve as a reference and example of what people are not actually called by the Lord to follow, as well as of that from which people can now experience freedom through Christ Jesus.

Thus, **the one who believes in Christ, receives Him as Lord, and becomes His follower is no longer under the regulations of the Law of Moses, which are also described in the Scriptures themselves for the purpose of showing the weakness and the expiration of the law that never succeeded or will be able to perfect, before God, a person who strives to follow it.**

Still following the above example, it should be noted, therefore, **that an appropriate reading and study of the Bible cannot be performed adequately without being also accompanied by a particular attention to identify which parts of the Scriptures refer to each type of law described in them.**

And considering how meaningful is the understanding of an appropriate distinction between each set of laws recorded in the Scriptures, God has already given us an excellent rule of help in order that we may be able to observe better this great division, which was so clearly manifested to us in the writings recorded by Paul and also in other books of the New Testament, as also exemplified below:

Hebrews 7: 12 **For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.**

With the manifestation of Christ to the world, there was also a clear manifestation of the different laws to which people associate their choices in order to seek to attain eternal salvation and newness of life. In the Law of Moses, or similar to it, for instance, the human beings attempted to justify themselves before God by their works. Regarding salvation and life in Christ, however, an individual is justified by heavenly grace through faith in God.

In Christ a person is justified by trust in God and by the heavenly provision of justification, mercy, and love that the Lord provides, whereas in the Law of Moses only complete obedience or fulfilment of all the regulations of this law would justify a human being, and where the failure in just one would condemn a person forever. A reason why no one finds salvation in the submission of this second category of law.

In this way, **in the same Bible, is contained, for instance, a description of the "Law of Moses" and of the "Law of Christ", but not for a person to try to reconcile or mix them in the daily practice of life, but, instead, to know that these two laws are not compatible.**

In Christ, people are called to receive salvation in the Lord and to live and walk according to the Law of Christ. Salvation this, that also contemplates even the liberation of an individual from the yoke of slavery, cursing, and condemnation that is associated with the subjection to the Law of Moses.

Repeating, therefore, once again, to begin to make a “right division of the Word of Truth” it is necessary, then, to know at least the major distinctions that separate the two laws referenced above.

Considering, however, one more time that the Law of Moses was not included in the Bible for Christians to submit to it, why then did God record the set of instructions of

this law “in His Scriptures” or “in the narratives that the Lord inspired men and women to write”?

The Law of Moses, speaking briefly, was given in response to a longing of the own people for it and for not wanting to relate directly to God.

In one particular episode of human history, God freed a group of people from a yoke of bondage in the land of Egypt, in which these people were subjected to hard bondage to other men. Moreover, after the liberation from slavery, God invited each of the released individuals to live in a personal relationship with Him, but the people chose not to do so, preferring a relationship through mediating men and via a set of external and “pre-established” list of rules. They wanted a manual of conduct designed to live a life that in practice is dynamic and full of vivid and distinct situations, and which cannot be encompassed and managed essentially by rules of external regulations.

Shortening the story, which is more broadly addressed in later subjects, those who wanted the Law of Moses were never able to comply with its regulations, but their desire to experience this kind of life was granted to them by God for teaching and learning about how ineffective this law is in regard to the provision of true salvation and life.

The facts and writings of the Law of Moses are, indeed, part of the records of the Bible, but this does not mean that they apply to those who want to live a life in conformity with the will of God. On the contrary, these parts were also recorded for the purpose of showing how much they do not match the will of the heavenly kingdom for the life of people.

*Hebrews 7: 18 **For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,***
*19 **for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.***

In this way, **wanting to assign the requirements of the Law of Moses to Christians is a practice of a “BAD or INADEQUATE Division of the Word of God,” for whoever lives in Christ and Christ in him is no longer under the Law of Moses.**

The fact there will always be people in the world who will want to take some alternative and non-direct paths of relationship with God, seeking to do so through mediators or a set of external rules, is one of the main reasons why the Lord has exemplified in His Scriptures how these alternative paths are ineffective.

The record of the Law of Moses in the Scriptures was performed, among its primary objectives, to highlight that many people in the world long or want to obtain the benefit of God's protection over them, but in a way that does not imply the need to depend on the practice of a personal and direct relationship with God.

Therefore, the historical records of that law and the attempts of life according to its precepts are very useful to demonstrate that the results of a choice of trying to live by the Law of Moses have never met and will never find success before God.

One of the “essential good news” of the Lord Jesus Christ is a real offer of reconciliation with God and which was provided by His work on the cross of Calvary precisely for the purpose that anyone who wishes to return to relate personally with God can do it by faith in Christ Jesus. Thus, granting them a perfect and beneficial alternative rather than the inefficacy of the law of the old covenant.

The mediation between God and the people on Earth, which by the Law of Moses was made by fallible men and subjected to weakness and death, after Christ's work on the cross of Calvary, became the exclusive and eternal right of the One Who is the Eternal Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God.

*1 Timothy 2: 5 **For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**
6 **who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.***

*Hebrews 7: 28 **For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.***

The life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ forever changed the possibilities of people's relationship with God, highlighting that a handling of the Word of Truth that does not have a personal and direct relationship with Christ as one of the pillars for a “right division of the Word of Truth” will be, undoubtedly, subject to run into inconsistent and erroneous interpretations of the general purpose of the Lord recorded in the Word of Truth and written down over the centuries.

Through Christ, and His redemptive work before the world, a new way was opened, a new path was provided for the human being to be able to relate to God. A new option of a relationship not based on a huge number of external regulations and sacrifices, but based on a relationship of faith in God, which, in turn, occurs from the presence of Christ in the heart of each who receives Him as Lord.

For this reason, there are many writings of the so-called New Testament that address the risks and consequences that occur when the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ are not correctly discerned and separated.

*Romans 3: 19 **Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**
20 **Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.***

Finally, in this chapter, as a practical exercise of a more attentive study of the Scriptures, we would like to suggest at this point, that the reader, if possible, pauses the advance in this material for a brief reading, in his or her Bible, of the whole text of the letter to the Galatians. And this, with the practical purpose of seeing how much space is occupied in this letter to alert Christians on the relevance of the distinction of the themes and principles that there are around them, as well as about the distinction between the so-called Law of Moses and the new life in Christ Jesus.

We suggest reading the letter of Galatians at this point so that the practical application of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" may be even more exercised right since now in the reader's relationship with the Scriptures of the Lord.

C4. Differentiating Rightly Dividing the Scriptures from the Structural Division of the Old Testament, New Testament, Books, Chapters, and Verses

The Christian Bible, which God permitted to be passed on to us with its records of many centuries, is usually presented to us in a structured way in two large blocks of books, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament.

These two great blocks, in turn, present their respective division in the so-called books, where the books were divided into chapters and, the latter, into verses.

These structures indeed contribute a lot when there is a desire to make references to the texts that are encompassed in the Bible. On the other hand, it is good to remember that the original records were not constructed in this way by their writers. The texts were originally written in a linear, unstructured, or a common way to the respective epochs of each of these authors.

The book of Psalms, for instance, was not pre-elaborated as a complete book of 150 psalms. Their songs were written separately from each other, and even for years and centuries, being grouped at some later time in history to compose what came to be called the “Book of Psalms.”

Similarly, the New Testament letters were also written over the years and addressed to various groups of saints in Christ who lived in different cities and regions. Several texts of what is now called the New Testament, as regards their original structure, were simply letters without any division of chapters and verses.

The structural divisions of the biblical texts, regarding the more orderly presentation of the Scriptures, and which were later added, certainly cooperated in the dissemination of their writings to the present day, as well as in facilitating the manner of indicating each of their parts and its contents. Nevertheless, **despite the significant benefits that these structures have brought to a functional handling of such a large volume of recorded texts over the centuries, it is important not to incur an inappropriate surrender to these divisions as if these represent what in the Bible is called as “rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”**

Therefore, it seems beneficial to us sometimes to read excerpts from the Bible with the original perspective, without the structural divisions. For example, as suggested in the previous chapter, one may read the letter to the Galatians as one who reads a letter received from a friend and who wants to read it thoroughly from beginning to end. For this, an effort is required to do a sequential or continuous reading without stopping in the divisions of chapters and topics added by the editors in contemporary Bibles.

Another important point to be remembered at this moment is that the records considered authenticated by God as His inspired and written Word are limited to the core texts of the Scriptures.

That is, when we read the texts in the so-called “Modern Bibles,” it is of great value to understand and be aware that “commentaries” and “Titles” attributed to blocks of the Scriptures records, for instance, are not an actual part of the so-called “Word of God” or “Word of Truth.” The “commentaries” and “Titles” attributed to the chapters or blocks of the Scriptures express considerations that people and publishers afterward

added as complements and headers of these blocks, and should therefore always be considered under this point of view.

In the original shape of the Scriptures records, themes do not necessarily form blocks of subjects according to the divisions that have been added by editors over the years.

Exemplifying the preceding considerations, an account of the Scriptures that can be observed, and which is well-known in the world, is the so-called narrative of the “Prodigal Son” and that is attributed as counted as such by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. However, although some Bibles present as a title the phrase “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” in relation to the verses in reference, it is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus did not say that this narrative was a parable and even did not mention that it was an account of the “prodigal son”.

Below it can be seen, then, how the Lord Jesus Christ narrated the beginning of the account in reference:

*Luke 15: 11 **Then He said: “A certain man had two sons.”***

The story told by the Lord Jesus begins with the information that “**a certain man had two sons.**” Moreover, the details that are presented by the Lord in the sequence not only cover the story of a “Prodigal Son,” but it is the story of a man who was a father, it is the story of his two sons, and it is also the story of many other characters, such as the servants who worked in the house of the father and the people referenced in the various places by which the son who left the house had passed.

If the story in reference is observed more carefully, the most evidenced person in it is not only one son, but, above all, the father who never stopped loving his sons and who always also treated respectfully all those who worked for him.

Looking at this example above, it may be noted that it is important not to become overly involved in the headers that have been added to the current structures of the Bible. These divisions and titles can cooperate structurally and facilitate the localization of texts, but they can also induce an inattentive person to always think of the texts according to the titles in the way they were nominated by the editors, thus limiting the perception of what the Lord left recorded for our teaching.

Also from the angle of the sons, the narrative presented by the Lord Jesus should not only serve as a teaching for persons who have adopted an explicit deviation from the relationship with God, but also for those who do so in a veiled way, as it was the case of the son who remained in his father's house, and yet, rebuked his father for the love that he had also expressed toward his brother.

Returning, then, to the aspect of the structural and organizational classifications that have been added to the Scriptures throughout the centuries, we would stress here that **the very global division of the so-called Old Testament and New Testament itself also requires particular attention in the aspect of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth,” for the mere structural division of these two great blocks does not, by itself, define the characteristics of the Scriptures contained in them.**

What is commonly called the Old Testament (OT), are the sets of records that were added in the Bible and were written before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh to Earth. However, not all the contents of this block of Scripture contain aspects that are pertinent only to what the Scriptures call as the “Old Covenant.”

Moreover, what is commonly called the New Testament (NT), are the sets of records that were added in the Bible and which were written after the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh to Earth. However, similarly to the Old Testament, also the New Testament block of texts does not contain only expressions that are exclusively pertinent to what the Scriptures reveal as the New Covenant, which is exemplified in the text below:

Hebrews 12: 24 ... to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

The Scriptures described aspects of various testaments, pacts, or covenants, and also that, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh to the world, indeed a new time of God's relationship to human beings has been inaugurated. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested as the Unique Mediator of the New Covenant of relationship with God that men and women came to have the opportunity to practice.

However, **the mere structural division of the Scriptures into the Old Testament and New Testament is not necessarily or respectively equated with everything that the Scriptures call as the Old Covenant and as the New Covenant which is in Christ.**

When there is no understanding that the contents of the Old Testament and the contents of the New Testament have, in each of these two great blocks of texts, instructions both on the Old Covenant and on the New Covenant, some readers may be led to think of a simplistic and misleading division of the Bible instructions. That is, to follow only the structural classification through which the written Word of God is presented, instead of following a proper conceptual division of the various parts of Scripture, has led many readers and scholars to a blurred vision of the contents that are in each one of the two great blocks of texts that are in the Bible.

When addressed on an Old Testament theme, several individuals or groups of people, for instance, respond that this does not apply to them because it is in the “Old Testament.” Some even go so far as to say that they only consider the “New Testament” as valid for the guidance of their lives. These forms of divisions of the Scriptures, however, are not divisions of the “rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

There are many texts also in the books of the so-called “Old Testament” that will never cease to be applicable to individuals who seek a life according to the principles and will of God for life in Christ Jesus.

When it was seen, in the previous chapter, “*that whatever the law (of Moses) says is for those who are under the law it says,*” the text is referring specifically to “the Law of Moses,” and not to all words spoken by Moses, nor in relation to all the words that God spoke to Moses or that were inspired by the Holy Spirit to be recorded in the block of texts of the denominated, in our days, Old Testament.

Moses even declared songs and psalms that are not part of the “Law of Moses,” and their application is not limited to a simple structural and organizational division of the “Old and New Testament,” as we see, for example, in Psalm 90, which beginning is exposed below:

***Psalms 90: 1 A Prayer of Moses the man of God.
Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed
the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You
are God.***

The psalm of Moses described above and contained in the Book of Psalms is not part of a statement of the “Law of Moses,” but rather a declaration of a man who discovered a truth about God and declared it in a psalm or song with an application for all the human generations.

Also in the New Testament's own contents are found several instructions for Christians to adopt behaviors and postures of people who lived in ancient times and whose accounts are in the block of texts called the Old Testament.

As a further complementary example, also in the New Testament can clearly be seen that the Bible reiterates Abraham's conducts of faith that were recorded in the Old Testament. So, also the new part of the Scriptures is reaffirming the story of a man who believed in God and that he, in this condition, was favored by the Lord long before the “Law of Moses” even existed.

Abraham's relationship with God was a relationship based on Abraham's faith in God and not on codes of rules and laws that were expounded many years later in what came to be called the Old Covenant. Thus, merely dismissing the example of Abraham because he lived in the Old Testament's time does not express a “rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

And to highlight what has been commented on in the above paragraphs, let us see a New Testament narrative concerning this man presented to the readers since the earliest books of the Old Testament:

***Galatians 3: 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the
Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand,
saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”
9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.***

There are many aspects of the so-called Old Testament that point to the relationship that God would later offer to humankind in Christ Jesus, just as there are several New Testament texts that explain and instruct on the narratives of the Scriptures presented before the coming of Christ Jesus in the flesh to the world and which still continue to express what makes part of a personal and living relationship with the Lord, as exemplified below also in the words of a prophet of ancient times:

Isaiah 40: 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall,
31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

The text of Isaiah, referenced above, is again an example of an excerpt that is not subjected to the Law of Moses, although it is in the Old Testament, for this text announces truths about God and about people's relationships with Him that apply in all the times and generations of human life.

Therefore, once again emphasizing the point in reference in this chapter, “**rightly dividing the Word of Truth**” involves growing in the understanding of the purpose of the various parts of the Scriptures, aiming to be able to separate them not simply by the structural and organizational aspects of their divisions, but mainly by the themes, concepts, principles, or purposes for which the Lord granted the most diverse excerpts of the Bible.

C5. The Facts and the Chronological Time

John 1: 17 ***For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.***

Finally, yet in the present subject, we would like to emphasize another aspect that has seemed to us to cause considerable confusion for some people in the analysis and application of the biblical texts, making it necessary, for this, to return once again to what was mentioned in earlier chapters concerning the question that the opposite position of a person being “under the law” is one to be under the condition of “the grace of God.”

And although the condition of God's grace does, indeed, include the liberation of people from the yoke of the law, we understand that it should be pointed out here that the attempt to make a simplistic combination of the condition offered by grace with an undue chronological perspective on human life, may come to lead inattentive people to a precarious understanding that the division and application of Bible texts can be accomplished just because of their time in human history, and not primarily because of the individual positioning of each person in relation to God and His Scriptures.

Considering that the Scriptures announce that God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, manifests His “heavenly grace” to human beings and that through Moses there was the manifestation of the “law” of the First Covenant, some people incur the inadequate thought that propagates that from the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh to Earth, a “time of the grace of God” is automatically applied to all people and that the “time of all influence of the Law of Moses” ceased upon humankind, regardless of how people stand in relation to the grace or the law.

By the text presented at the beginning of this chapter, it is certain that with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God inaugurated a new and differentiated time of the manifestation of His heavenly grace. However, did this imply a total removal of people's conduct in seeking to adopt a form of life in accordance with the system of the Law of Moses or similar to it?

From the writings of Paul also to Christians in the city of Corinth, we see that actually, since the coming of Christ in the flesh to the world, both the options for grace or for the law began to be selected by the people on Earth.

So, the “time of grace” or the “time of law” are not related only to the chronological factor of the epoch of history in which an individual is inserted, but much more to the posture of each person who chooses and subjects oneself to one or to the other form of conduct of life and walking in the world. Moreover, through this kind of choice, a person also chooses to put oneself in subjection to the consequences of the way which one decided to follow, as exemplified below:

2 Corinthians 3: 15 ***But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.***

16 ***Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.***

Regarding this last text mentioned above, we consider it important to note that this letter to the Corinthians was written several years after the Lord's coming in the flesh to the world. And **in this letter, even though it has been written several years after the grace has already been revealed in Christ to humankind, we see that the conduct that determines or not the removal, from a person, of the veil of blindness caused by the surrendering to the Law of Moses is not only the chronological time of human history, but, primarily, the personal posture of an individual in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ.**

That is, both the conduct of choosing the way of life in conformity with the Law of Moses and the way of life in accordance with the faith in Christ Jesus, have both been present simultaneously in the world, even after several years of the manifestation of Christ to the world and of His work on the cross of Calvary.

Therefore, **the working of grace and the working of the law, respectively, are manifested to each person also according to the individual choice in favor of the grace of Christ or toward the Law of Moses.**

The considerations described above, for instance, can also be explained, to a certain extent, in relation to changes in the laws of a country, state, or city. Often the official bodies change laws and declare them in force, but the population can take years to know them and adopt them in their practices, or even never adopt them, preferring to behave according to the previous law. Thus, in these places, it may occur that there are people who live according to the new law and people who live according to the old law, although the validity of the old law has been exhausted and has already been declared revoked and obsolete.

Chronological time obviously may have an effect on a person's life decisions, for there are factors currently available that were not in the past, but chronological time alone does not imply that people automatically choose and follow what the Lord has already made available to them.

We have already seen, in previous chapters, that **Christ came to offer a life that no longer needs to embrace the submission to the precepts of the Law of Moses just because they are written in the Bible, but this does not mean that all people will choose to stop being under the Law of Moses even though this law has already been declared obsolete by the Lord.**

It is not necessarily the chronology that defines people's positioning, but rather their personal choices of relationship with the options for which they can choose.

Even though, before God, the time that approved the attempt to live according to the Law of Moses has already been closed, it is still granted to people to choose to live by this law instead of choosing life by the grace that the Lord already has also manifested to humankind.

Therefore, as already discussed in the subject History Told by the Father of All Sons and Daughters, when it was dealt with the topic of an instruction of God that was specific or restricted to Adam and Eve, and which was never again repeated completely to any generation that succeeded them, we repeat here again that **the reading and studying of the Scriptures should always be performed with the dependence of the instruction and wisdom of the Lord. And this, also with**

the aim of achieving the discernment between what the Lord aspires that people should practice in all generations and what has been addressed to specific generations and recorded as a historical fact for instruction, knowledge, but which should no longer be practiced in the present time.

And again, we reiterate that every individual needs the heavenly wisdom to understand the texts of the various parts of the Scriptures, including also what is regarding the New Testament, since also in the latter there are parts that are accounts of historical facts and that do not automatically represent actions that all Christians should adopt indiscriminately in their lives.

Looking, for instance, at the book of Acts of the Apostles, it may be observed that it contains many very significant principles about the Christian life, but that it also contains other excerpts which are accounts and facts of history as they occurred and which do not necessarily need to be practiced equally by Christians who have the possibility of access to the entire New Testament. Thus, the principle of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” should also be used concerning the texts of books like the book of Acts, taking into account that this book is a set of “historical-conceptual” Scriptures and that it also should be read and studied in conformity with this characteristic.

Still, following the point addressed in the last paragraphs, it is possible to observe that the book of the Acts of the Apostles has a strong historical character in the narrating of the first steps of the Christians in Jerusalem and after its expansion to many other regions and nations.

And although we do not wish to make a detailed analogy of the book of Acts at this moment, we emphasize here, however, that it can be observed in it that a series of practices adopted in the early years of Christian life ceased to be practiced by Christians and that for a very simple reason: Christians already were no longer just in the context of Jerusalem. (Acts chapters 1 to 10).

In Jerusalem, Christians followed the practice of meeting in the temple and from house to house because there was a temple already built and there was still the previous custom of seeking the Lord in this particular place. When, however, the Christian life reached other territories, some practices were just not viable by environmental and logistical issues. And the gospel has not ceased to be preached and to reach lives or hearts even for this reason.

The Lord Jesus, and none of His apostles, taught that Christians should build temples to meet themselves together in them, for this was not part of the essence of the Christian life that the Lord came to offer, showing that in the history of the Christian people there are accounts of practices carried out which were circumstantial and which were not necessarily part of the essential principles of the Christian life that the Lord came to offer and grant to those who believe in Him.

So, as for “rightly dividing the Scriptures,” it is not prudent to follow an exclusive and circumstantial experience of the early years of the “Christian people” and which is not supported by a teaching of the Lord as a principle to be considered as part of the instructions on how to live the Christian life.

Even though narrated in the Scriptures as a historical fact related to Christians, if an ancient practice does not find support or validation in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not for later followers to do so just because one group practiced it at a particular epoch.

It is not up for present generations to transform simple historical accounts of practiced acts in doctrines or principles to be followed by Christians if these events and practices lack an objective teaching of God that validate them by means of heavenly instructions or principles, even if some narrative is a very part of the Scriptures.

If a historical fact occurred because of a teaching of the Lord Jesus and the occurrence of it served for the demonstration of this principle, this instruction of the Lord should be observed and adopted by Christians as such. However, a historical fact, just because it was faithfully narrated in the Bible, does not make it a principle to be practiced by all future generations.

God, in His Scriptures, did not omit the actions that the first generation of Christians did because they still had roots in their local customs and circumstances of life. However, it is not because they have been registered in the Bible that these actions can be, automatically, acknowledged as doctrines of the Lord. If some of those actions contradict the fundamental teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ about the Christian life, they are not the instructions of the Lord to be followed just because some people or even multitudes practiced them at some point in history.

The Lord Jesus, for instance, never declared the teachings about Christians start to deposit money at the feet of the apostles, and also because of this, the “structure and rules of operation” of the early Christians in Jerusalem could not be sustained, as indeed it was not sustained for a long time.

Several practices of the early Christians ceased altogether when the people were dispersed out of Jerusalem, out of their earlier traditions. And who knows if it also was not because of this that they needed to be scattered?

The Lord Jesus Christ, already after His resurrection from the dead, had told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel beyond the borders of Jerusalem and Israel. Nevertheless, until the times of dispersion, the Christian people did not apply much to this instruction of Christ, incurring in some traditional practices that later needed to be abandoned or collapse into nothing.

And furthermore, if for every historical fact narrated in the Scriptures we had to receive it automatically as a doctrine, it would also be necessary to extract from the dispersion a teaching or an instruction that the correct way of going to preach to people would be only under these kinds of persecutions. This principle, however, would obviously be absurd, for the Lord Himself instructs us in His written Word to pray for peace so that *“we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness, reverence, and honesty.”*

Thus, there are some practices described in the Bible, and which even were performed by Christians in Jerusalem in the early years, that do not necessarily find support in the Lord's teachings to be transformed into the doctrines of Christ for all other followers.

There are descriptions of historical facts in the Scriptures that are, indeed, expressions of the practice of correct principles. However, there are also historical facts that are the narrative of how things happened in certain events, some of which may be the expression of appropriate practices, while others inappropriate, and, even, where others do not need, necessarily, to be correct or incorrect in the face of what people knew until their days.

Yet about the example of the temple of Jerusalem, the historical records inform us that it was destroyed approximately in the year 70 after Christ. The growth of Christians, however, was never limited by this fact, for this was or is not the kind of sanctuary to which Christ came to restore. The Lord Jesus has come to restore broken or wounded hearts so that people can experience God's salvation and a relationship with Him at any time and place to which the Lord leads them.

1 Corinthians 3: 16 ***Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?***

The people of the current generation, at least to a large part, have access to the whole Bible and can do the reading of it observing the beginning of the narrated facts, but, much more, also the end of the descriptions of the recorded events, aspect that, like as in the story of Job, is very important for the understanding of the previous parts.

The Bible, for Christians, is certainly the expression of the “Word of God” and the “Word of Truth,” and also so it should be forever. However, a Christian should also be aware that in the Scriptures themselves are recorded instructions on the need to perform a proper handling of them or to rightly divide each part of the Word of Truth, so that it may also be discerned according to the purposes and instructions of the Lord.

C6. The Essential Condition of Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth to Discern the Christian Life

The development of the ability of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth,” which is referred to in the text of 2Timothy and along this subject, is indeed very challenging.

Nevertheless, we understand that it is important to accentuate once again here that the Bible encompasses the records on Earth of the written Word of Truth, and which God has bestowed on humankind to show the way of salvation, of truth itself, and of life. And so, what if a person does not aim or seek guidance for his or her life in the Lord and the Word of Truth, in what will he or she seek guidance then?

The Lord Jesus Christ has always spoken challenging words to His followers and to the multitudes that followed Him. Even words that made many people walk away from Him. But when the Lord Jesus questioned Peter about whether he would or would not follow the Lord, Peter replied:

*John 6: 68 **But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."***

Although the Word of the Lord is challenging for every individual, it is the Lord's desire that all should seek it so that He may grant that each person may attain enlightened understanding in order to have a proper discernment of the will of the heavenly kingdom and to be able to live and walk sheltered under the loving grace of God, as well as to be instructed and protected for not to stay subjected to that which is out of His will.

We stress here once more, that there are records in the Scriptures that express or instruct on how to follow the will of God, but there are also others that show exactly the will that God does not want for people, and that, therefore, show that these both sets of teachings and examples need to be separated distinctly or appropriately.

Thus, we can see that everything that is “biblical,” that is, the entire Scripture of the “Word of Truth” that the Lord addressed to the people on Earth, is designed to instruct the Christians in their lives in the Lord. However, it is also essential to note that not everything that is “biblical” was recorded as an instruction of something that should be applicable to the Christian's life, encompassing the Scriptures, therefore, a broad set of instructions to be practiced, but also others that instruct what should be rejected and even avoided in advance.

Just to know the Scriptures, without properly discerning the purpose for which they were recorded, accepting them in a simplistic way and without aiming to understand the purpose for which each part was granted, does not constitute a life of faith in the Eternal Lord and His Word, for it is the Lord Himself Who also calls people to seek the discernment of the various parts of the “Word of Truth.”

A lot of lies and confusion about what should constitute the Christian life have been thrown to people on Earth, and even many of them as if they are supported by the Scriptures. But these lies and confusion, because they were not conceived according to

“rightly dividing of the Word of Truth,” are contrary to the purposes of truth itself and, as a consequence, they offer paths of deceit, death, and destruction under the pretext of being propositions of God just because the mere fact of referring themselves to some “biblical” expression.

Therefore, emphasizing once again, **it is an inherent part of the Christian life to be willing to be instructed by the Lord also in the proper relationship with the Scriptures made available by Him, being, on the other hand, a great danger, with real possibilities of great harm, not inclining the heart for this heavenly instruction.**

In other words, **exercising faith in the Eternal Lord and His Word also contemplates making use of the discernment instructed by Him about a sober-minded and wise relationship with the “Word of Truth.”**

So, our hope and prayer is that God, also in our days, may grant His grace to Christians so that they can discern what is “biblical” and what should be followed by them in their condition as Christians, but also, at the same time, that Christians may perceive and know how to rightly separate that what is not directed to them to be followed. Because, finally, it is in the Eternal Lord, our God, that wisdom is found to know, to understand and to live according to Eternal Truth, as it is also announced in the prayer of the Psalm below:

*Psalms 86: 11 **Teach me Your way, O LORD; and I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.***

Bibliography

Note on Biblical Texts referenced:

- 1) The biblical texts without explicit indications of reference were drawn from NKJV Bible, as indicated below.
- 2) Highlights in the biblical texts, such as underline, bold, or similar were added by the author of this study.

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