



“Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth”



BIBLE CONFERENCE

by Carl W. Deems Th. D.

THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

INTRODUCTION:

In this lesson, I will give an overview of the history of mankind from a Biblical perspective. I will present seven major divisions in the history of mankind given in the Scriptures. In this presentation, I will consider the Tribulation period to be a transitional period, similarly to the transition in the book of Acts, although some Biblical students like to give it its own division. Each division has a particular character and in each division God gives man a chance to prove himself worthy. Unfortunately, each division ends up with mankind failing in some way and coming under judgment.

WHY ARE THE DIVISIONS IMPORTANT?

It is very important for the Bible student to understand how the Bible is divided. There are seven major divisions (eight if you count the Tribulation) in human history according to the Bible. Five of the divisions have already taken place, we are presently in the sixth, and there are two more to be fulfilled (three if you count the Tribulation). In each division, a change occurs in the God's relationship with mankind. It is very important to note these changes. Many false teachings and religious practices can result when divisional changes have not been taken into account.

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN THE DIVISIONS

Although there are major differences in God's relationship with man with each division in human history, there is also a consistent process of seven steps by which God and man interact. The first step in the process is God Himself. God is always the “initiator” throughout human history. Everything in the universe began with God, and in each division of human history God is the “first to make a move” toward mankind. The second step in the process is God's grace. Since God is merciful, he extends mercy (often called unmerited favor) to an undeserving mankind.

Third, in each division, God communicates to man either by the spoken or written word. For example, God told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it would cause him to die. He told Noah to build an ark because a flood is coming. He told Abram that he will have a son by Sarah and today He tells the lost sinner to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

Fourth, in each division, man is required to believe what God has said. This means he is to have faith. Fifth, the result of the man believing what God has said is that man the man will obey God. Sixth, obedience results in “good works.”

James 2: 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

The last and seventh step in the process is God’s blessings given to the man for his good works (“doing right”). Often in the Bible, a man is put under a trial not for the purpose of punishment, but for the purpose of God wanting to bring a blessing. For example, Abraham was asked by God to offer up his son and Job had to endure losing all his earthly possessions. In the end however, both men received blessings as a result of their proper response to their trials. The process that brings about blessings is summarized as follows:

God-Grace-Word (spoken or written)-Faith-Obedience-Good Works-Blessings

There is also an opposite process. If man does not believe what God has told him (i.e. he lacks faith and acts in “unbelief”) then he will disobey and not do what God told him to do. Acting in unbelief results in curses and judgment. The process that brings about curses is summarized as follows:

God-Grace-Word (spoken or written)-Unbelief-Disobedience-Bad Works-Curses

One can see the principle of blessing at work in the life of Abraham. God extended grace to Abraham and told him to go to a place he would receive for an inheritance. Abraham believed God and “went out” and ultimately gets blessed as a result:

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

Although there are exceptions with individuals (e.g. there are those in the last 2000 years that have believed what God said about the gospel and “obeyed it” Rom 10:16) and nations, (e.g. Nineveh’s repentance after the preaching of Jonah), the common element found in each of the divisions of human history is that man usually disobeys God because of his unbelief. It is God that gives man the chance to “prove” himself, but it is man that falls short each time.

WHY DID GOD DECIDE TO DEAL WITH MANKIND DIFFERENTLY THROUGHOUT HISTORY?

So why did God choose to deal differently with mankind during different periods of history? Basically, to show mankind that he is a FAILURE. By the time the history of mankind has run its course, mankind will have fallen seven times within the seven divisions of human history. In each division of history, God set the circumstances such that another aspect of man's character and make-up might be tested. Mankind fails each time. This is to be expected since Paul says of man "they are all under sin."

Rom. 3:9-12 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are **all under sin**; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Eventually lost men, after seeing their failure throughout human history, will have to admit to themselves and to God that they ARE SINNERS and responsible for their damnation. Mankind never is or will be able to redeem itself. Mankind's failure in each division shows that he needs the blood Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, or as John the Baptist said:

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

OLD TESTAMENT VERSUS NEW TESTAMENT "CHURCH AGE"

Anyone who picks up the Bible will notice that it is divided into Old and New Testaments. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. The Old Testament is written primarily to and about the Jewish nation of Israel and the New Testament is written primarily to the Body of Christ (the Church). Although Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are placed in the New Testament canon, actual doctrinal changes between the Old and New Testament take place at the time of Jesus Christ's death burial and resurrection.

If there is only one reason for you to see the divisions and differences between the Old and New Testament is so that you DO NOT APPLY the requirements or characteristics of the Old Testament to you or your church in this present time. The differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament "Church Age" are quite striking.

For example, Old Testament saints were not born again nor sealed by the Holy Spirit. In fact it was the exception in the Old Testament for a person to "get" the

Holy Ghost at all. Usually only prophets would get the Holy Ghost. Not only that, but in the Old Testament God could withdraw his Holy Spirit from a person such as He did with Samson and King Saul.

Old Testament saints did not have spiritual circumcision. Old Testament saints were not put into the Body of Christ whereas New Testament church age saints are:

Eph 5:30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

In addition, Old Testament saints went to Paradise in the heart of the earth when they died. New Testament saints go directly to heaven. Old Testament saints offered up animal sacrifices that could never take away sins but New Testament church age saints are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. (Note: the blood of Christ was eventually applied to all of the Old Testament saints however.)

There are other differences but suffice it to say the Old Testament is very different than the New Testament.

AFTER THE NEW TESTAMENT “CHURCH AGE”

Just as some of the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament “Church Age” are striking, so too are the differences between the New Testament “Church Age” and what follows in the Tribulation and the Millennium. From a primarily Gentile focus in New Testament “Church Age,” God will change his focus back to the Jew and the nation of Israel. In fact there will be no “church” (body of Christ) on the earth during the Tribulation because it will have been “raptured” out to heaven:

1 Thes. 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord

During the Tribulation, temple worship will be reinstated (although not accepted-most likely-since the Jews will make a covenant with the Devil in order to do so) and Moses and Elijah will return as a witness against the antichrist and to proclaim Jesus Christ as the true Messiah. 144,000 Jewish virgins from the various Jesus tribes will be “sealed in their foreheads” and to make things more unusual, an angel will fly in the heavens preaching an “everlasting gospel” even though the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ will have occurred well over 2000 years prior. Even the world and the anti-Christ will begin to center their attention on Jerusalem and the newly constructed temple (e.g. the anti-Christ will go into the temple and proclaim that he is God). Gentiles and Jews who will not

receive the Mark of the Beast will be persecuted and executed.

The second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ puts an end to the Tribulation and shortly after His return He sets up his Kingdom called the Millennium (because His reign will last 1000 years). During the Millennium, the Lord Jesus Christ will rule from Jerusalem with a rod of iron not only over the Jews but over all the Gentile nations as well. The observance of most of the Jewish Law will be reinstated (including Temple sacrifices!) and the Gentile nations that have been found worthy will come to pay respects to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The church age saints (the Body of Christ has now become the Bride of Christ as well) will be reigning with Jesus Christ.

In summary, you should be very careful not to get your “church” doctrine from Tribulation and Millennial doctrine in the scriptures.

THE SEVEN DIVISIONS OF THE HISTORY OF MANKIND:

1. Man Innocent: Edenic Division

The first division in the history of mankind extends from the creation of Adam until the time Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden. Adam was created innocent, like a child, not knowing good and evil. He was placed in the Garden of Eden and was told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Gen. 2:15-17 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Eventually, Adam and Eve did eat of the tree and fell. But God promised one day to send by way of the woman a seed that would bruise the head of the serpent. Soon thereafter, Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden:

Gen. 3:23-24 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

2. Man Under Conscience: Adamic Division

After the fall of Adam and Eve, mankind had the ability to discern both good

and evil. As a result, mankind had a conscience, and the basis for making moral judgments. Mankind now had the responsibility to avoid evil and to do good. This division of conscience lasted until the flood. By the end of this division, mankind's mind was on "evil continually:"

Gen. 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

The Bible says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and He told him to build the ark because He was going to judge the people of the world through a flood. Only Noah and his family were saved from the great flood.

3. Man Under Government: Noahic Division

After the flood, from Noah's family came all the peoples of the earth. God made a covenant with man that He would never flood the world again. Noah and his descendants were given the opportunity to rule the earth in wisdom and righteousness:

Gen. 9:1-7 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

Eventually man tries to build a city and a tower unto heaven in direct contradiction to what God commanded:

Gen. 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

Ultimately, mankind tried to become independent of God. This division ended in God confounding their languages and scattering them abroad upon the face of the earth:

Gen. 11:7-9 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

4. Man Under Promise: Abrahamic Division

During this division, God calls out one man whose name is Abram:

Gen. 12:1-3 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

God eventually enters into a covenant with Abram and covenanted with him concerning his seed and the land that they would live in. It only took three generations before the brothers of Joseph sell him into slavery in Egypt. Through providential intervention Joseph ends up second to Pharaoh and saves his family from famine by having them come to Egypt. In time, the Egyptians bring Israel as a nation under bondage.

5. The Jew Under Law: Law Division

God did not leave the nation of Israel under bondage forever, but sent them a deliverer in Moses. In the wilderness, God offered to them a new covenant contained in the Law. Rather than asking for mercy and relief from the Law they said in self-righteous confidence:

Exod. 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

The history of the Jews that followed for the next few years showed that the nation of Israel was not in the least able to keep the Law. Rather than an avenue of blessing, the Law became a curse. Rather than believe God and go into the Promised Land as commanded, the Jews recoiled at the thought and end up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

Then, after conquering the land under Joshua, the book of Judges recounts the failures of the Jews under its judges and God's chastening hand. In time, the Jews

request a King and they chose Saul who is, to say the least, a failure.

But God once again visits His people by anointing a little shepherd boy named David to be king. God covenanted with him that His seed would build a temple, and his posterity would rule the nation of Israel forever. Unfortunately, within two generations, the nation of Israel is divided in two and eventually ends up in exile (to Assyria and Babylon). A small remnant returned under Ezra and Nehemiah. The descendants of this remnant were in Israel under Roman occupation when the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

6. Man Under Christ: Church Division

The Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect life under the Law, healed the sick, raised the dead, and fed the hungry. The miracles that He performed were too many for John to recount in his gospel. He was the greatest teacher and preacher that ever lived.

Unfortunately, even with such a fantastic resume, Jesus is rejected by His own people and put to death by the Roman government.

The sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ and His atonement for the sins of the whole world marks the beginning of the present division of human history. This division is also called the “Age of Grace” or the “Church Age.” Salvation; perfect, complete, and eternal is offered to Jew and Gentile alike during this time:

Acts 20:16-21 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Within three hundred years of Christ’s resurrection however, His church “joins” up with the world (the Roman Emperor Constantine) in order to avoid persecution and “Christianity” becomes the “religion” of the Roman Empire. Rome’s Church proceeds to incorporate countless pagan beliefs and rituals into its practices, the worst of which is a false gospel of faith plus works for salvation. As a result, for the next 1000 years the world enters what historians call the “Dark Ages” and the “Medieval Time.”

The darkness of the Roman Catholic Church (and by this time the Greek Orthodox Church in the east) is broken around 1500 A.D. when men like William Tyndale and Martin Luther start printing the word of God in the language of the people. With more people having the word of God, and a realization that the Roman Catholic Church is practicing a false Christianity, people begin to rebel against the Roman Catholic Church. A Protestant movement begins and a time of “reformation” takes place in Europe. Once again salvation by faith in Christ alone is preached. The Reformation’s crowning work is the creation of the Authorized Version of the Bible in English in 1611 also known as the King James Version.

Once again however, within a couple of hundred years the church marries itself to the world by rejecting the truth of the scriptures and starts following after fables. In time the church eventually rejects the AV 1611 and ends up in total apostasy.

This division will end with the “rapture” of the church and the beginning of the Tribulation. There will be those that will be redeemed in this division, but at great price:

Rev. 6:9-11 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

During the Tribulation, the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church are to be judged. The Jew and the Gentile are to be judged on earth, the Church will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ in heaven.

This Tribulation ends with the nations of the world attempting to stop the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be thoroughly defeated:

Rev. 19:11-21 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in

blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

7. Man Under Christ's Rule: Millennial Division

The final division in the history of mankind is one in which the Lord Jesus Christ actually rules and reigns on the earth. This rule will last for 1000 years. Even though the world has had the most perfect ruler and government for 1000 years, it eventually rebels:

Rev. 20:7-9 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

The Great White Throne Judgment is the final end for an unregenerate, unbelieving, and rebellious mankind:

Rev. 20:10-15 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and

the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

After the Great White Throne Judgment, God will create a new heaven and a new earth wherein the “saved” of mankind (Jew, Gentile, and the Church) will dwell forever.

CONCLUSION:

In this lesson, I gave an overview of the history of mankind from a Biblical perspective. You saw that there are seven major divisions in the history of mankind. Each division has a particular character and in each division God gives man a chance to prove himself worthy. Unfortunately, each division ends up with mankind failing in some way.