

PROPHECY

Peter said to Israel, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN.” (Acts 3:19-21)

- I. Concerns a KINGDOM; a political ORGANIZATION (Daniel 2:44)
- II. The kingdom to be established ON EARTH (Jeremiah 23:5, Matthew 6:10)
- III. The kingdom PROPHESED since the world began (Luke 1:67-75)
- IV. Israel to be given SUPREMACY over the nations (Isaiah 61:6)
- V. The Gentiles to be blessed through Israel’s RISE AND INSTRUMENTALITY (Zechariah 8:13, 23)
- VI. Prophecy mainly concerns NATIONS (Isaiah 2:4)
- VII. Prophecy concerns blessings, both MATERIAL and spiritual, on EARTH (Isaiah 11:1-9)
- VIII. Christ comes to His people, Israel, ON EARTH (Revelation 1:7)
- IX. Justification is by a man’s faith and it must be a faith that WORKS (James 2:24)
- X. The proclamation of the prophetic program committed particularly to the TWELVE apostles (Acts 1:6-8)

MYSTERY

Paul said to the Body of Christ, “Now unto him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was KEPT SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN, BUT NOW IS MADE MANIFEST...” (Rom. 16:25-26a)

- I. Concerns a BODY; a spiritual ORGANISM (I Corinthians 12:12-13)
- II. The body given a position in HEAVENLY places (Ephesians 2:5-6)
- III. The body was chosen in Christ before the world began, but kept SECRET since the world began (Ephesians 1:4, 3:9)
- IV. Jew and Gentile placed on the SAME LEVEL before God (Romans 10:12, 11:32)
- V. The Gentiles blessed through Israel’s FALL AND DIMINISHING (Romans 11:11-12, 15)
- VI. The mystery concerns INDIVIDUALS (II Corinthians 5:17)
- VII. The mystery concerns all SPIRITUAL blessings in HEAVENLY places (Ephesians 1:3)
- VIII. Christ comes for His body, the Church, meeting them IN THE AIR (I Thessalonians 4:17)
- IX. Justification is by the faith of Christ (Galatians 2:16) and is received through faith WITHOUT WORKS (Romans 3:28; 4:5)
- X. The proclamation of the mystery committed particularly to PAUL (Colossians 1:24-27)

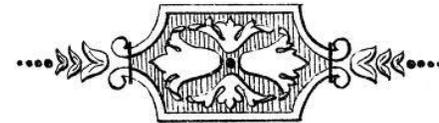
All scripture is for our learning (Rom. 15:4), but it was not all written to us or about us. The apostle Paul said that all scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16), but in the same epistle he also told us to study it by “rightly dividing” it (2 Tim. 2:15). Therefore, while all scripture is profitable for our study because it is given by inspiration of God, it can be rendered unprofitable, even hurtful, by failing to rightly divide it. To rightly divide the Bible is to identify and consistently maintain the divisions that God put in His word. For example, there is a difference between Israel and the church which is the Body of Christ.

When it comes to rightly dividing the word of truth, it is imperative that we identify the main division in the scriptures. Many Bible teachers claim that the main division in the Bible is between the Old and New Testaments. They say things like, “The Old Testament was for the Jews, and the New Testament is for the Church.” Technically, the Old Testament did not begin with Genesis but Exodus 20, and the New Testament did not begin with Matthew 1. The earthly ministry of our Lord was conducted under the Law (Gal. 4:4), and a New Testament was not even possible before He shed His precious blood (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:16).

Another serious blunder is to suppose that every mention of a church in scripture is a reference to the Body of Christ. A church is simply a called-out assembly. Israel was a “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), and the “little flock” of Jews that followed the Messiah was also a church (Matt. 18:17; Acts 2:47). The earthly ministry of Christ was to Israel (Matt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8). Those churches were very different from the “church which is his body” (Eph. 1:22-23). The Body of Christ is a spiritual organism that is neither Jew nor Gentile but one new man (Eph. 2:14-16). This Body could not have been formed before the casting away of Israel (Rom. 11:15), and therefore did not begin before Acts 7. Certainly, Israel had not yet been cast aside when they were being offered the prophesied kingdom in Acts 3:19-21. The events transpiring in the first chapters of Acts were in harmony with the prophesied “last days” that precede the setting up of the kingdom (Acts 2:16-17; 3:24). Many wrongly think that God was finished with Israel when they crucified Christ. On the cross Christ made intercession for Israel and as a result they were given an opportunity to repent (Lk. 23:34). It was only after Israel blasphemed the Holy Ghost that they fell as a nation (Matt. 12:31-32). They rejected the Father throughout the OT (e.g. 1 Sam. 8:4-7). They rejected the Son as their King in the Gospels. They rejected the offer of kingdom through the Spirit-filled apostles (Acts 1-7).

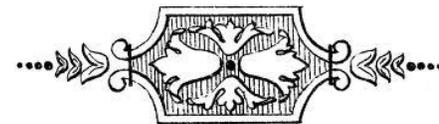
When God saved Saul of Tarsus (in Acts 9) by exceeding abundant grace (1 Tim. 1:12-16) and made him the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), He graciously interrupted the prophetic program that was headed toward the great tribulation and ushered in a mystery program. What is transpiring in this present dispensation was not prophesied by the prophets, but rather it was hidden from them and first revealed through the apostle Paul (Eph. 3:5). The nation of Israel is the subject of prophecy and the Body of Christ is the subject of the mystery. Thus, the most important division in the Bible is between prophecy (“spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began”) and mystery (“kept secret since the world began”).

The Main Division in the Bible



Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15



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