

RIGHTLY DIVIDING (6): - THE MESSIAH

We have previously shown that God's plan for man's salvation was formed even before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20). The centerpiece of the entire plan was Christ Jesus in whom we have redemption from sin (John 3:16; Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:30). The role of Christ was proclaimed, sometimes vaguely (Genesis 3:15) and sometimes quite directly (Isaiah 53). We may reasonably conclude, without fear of contradiction, that Jesus knew that he would both come to earth and that he would die here for the sins of the world (John 12:27-36, note especially verses 27 and 33). Jesus' passion upon this earth was neither accidental nor surprising to the Lord. It was part of a deliberate plan which would draw the blood of the innocent Lamb of God, close and annul the Old Testament forms of worship and initiate the Christian age.

The period of time which includes the personal ministry of our Savior is a period of transition. The church would be established about 6 weeks after Jesus' death on Pentecost (Acts 2:47). A Bible student might wonder about the significance of Jesus' teachings prior to the coming of the church. Do these teachings belong to the Mosaic age or to the Christian age? The answer is that Christ's teachings may apply either to the Mosaic age or to the coming church age. Only by carefully examining his teachings and applying sound Biblical principles of interpretation can we know. At least one well meaning brother among our fellowship has begun to trouble the brotherhood by predicating his interpretation of these questions on his prior interpretation of a single passage in Matthew. Because he does not like the teachings found there, he has, I believe, skewed his interpretation of the Gospels. So let us consider the coming of the Messiah, the time in which he lived, and the teachings he gave. Our goal is to discover the message he intends for us to have today.

Let us first dispense with one red herring issue raised by our mistaken brother. He makes much of the so-called title page which appears in most Bibles between Malachi and Matthew. This title page, which introduces the New Testament, is not inspired and likely did not appear for many centuries after the 27 books of the New Testament were compiled. We agree that it is an insertion of man. However, in my 43 years I have never once heard a preacher quote from the title page nor have I ever seen it referenced except in this brother's writings. The title page is not scripture and so far as I know has never claimed to be Scripture. It is an aid just like the concordance, the center-column references, the table of contents and so on. It is a non-issue.

Jesus lived and died as a Jew. Again, there is no serious question herein. While some new Christians may not have considered that Christ was not a Christian, at least not in the present day sense, they easily understand once they study the chronology of the Bible. Jesus was born to Jewish parents (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38) and grew up in Judaism. He kept the various laws of Judaism and was even well versed in the teachings of the Jews at the age of 12 (Luke 2:41-52). At the very end of his life, he was taken from that old rugged cross and buried quickly so as not to offend the Sabbath day which was about to begin (John 19:31-42).

The question for any Bible student is very direct and has nothing to do with title pages: Shall we obey all, none or some of Jesus teachings while he was upon this earth?

Bryant Evans

NEXT WEEK: :RIGHTLY DIVIDING" (7) – SHALL WE IGNORE THE CHRIST?