Basic Bible Comprehension

*A 13-Lesson **Radio Broadcast Series** Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®*

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

Basic Bible Comprehension is a 13-lesson radio broadcast series by Keith Blades in which he sets forth the most fundamental and important command God gives regarding the study of His Word: the command to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). Beginning with the confusion and apparent contradictions that perplex most Christians, Keith establishes that the Bible records two distinct and different programs of God — His program with Israel and His program with the Church, the Body of Christ — and that these two programs must be kept separate and not mixed together. The series traces the unique apostleship and mystery revelation of the Apostle Paul, examines the Lord's earthly ministry as belonging to Israel's program, distinguishes the gospel of the circumcision from the gospel of the uncircumcision, and works carefully through the opening chapters of the book of Acts to show why the Day of Pentecost is not the beginning of this present dispensation of grace. Rightly dividing the word of truth is the key to understanding and appreciating the Bible.

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Lessons at a Glance

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Lesson 1	Why the Bible confuses most Christians — examples of apparent contradictions
Lesson 2	The solution: rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15)
Lesson 3	Paul's unique apostleship — distinct from and not one of the Twelve
Lesson 4	Paul's message — new, and different from the message the Twelve were given to preach
Lesson 5	The mystery revealed to Paul — in other ages not made known (Ephesians 3)
Lesson 6	The Lord's earthly ministry — minister of the circumcision (Romans 15:8)
Lesson 7	The four Gospels as continuation of the Old Testament — not a new dispensation
Lesson 8	Different gospels in the Bible — gospel of circumcision vs. uncircumcision
Lesson 9	The gospel of the uncircumcision — reconciliation to God freely offered

Lesson	Core Focus
	today
Lesson 10	The opening chapters of Acts: Israel's program continuing — Pentecost is not the Church's birthday
Lesson 11	The opening chapters of Acts: God giving repentance to Israel before the Day of Wrath
Lesson 12	Acts 7 point of crisis and Acts 9: this present dispensation of grace brought in
Lesson 13	Series summary — Paul the tentmaker; just about every ism and schism traced to failing to rightly divide

Lesson Summaries

L1

Why the Bible Confuses Most Christians *The Problem Introduced*

- This series aims to learn what God Himself says about how to study His Word — so that Bible study is the blessing it really should be.
- The Bible will confuse any Christian who does not handle it the way God tells us to — sincerity alone is not enough.
- Christianity's confusion is evidenced by its many denominations: all claim to believe the Bible, yet they contradict one another in what they teach and how they practice.

Apparent Contradictions Illustrated

- Leviticus 11: God commands Moses to abstain from certain meats, declaring them unclean. 1 Timothy 4:3–5: Paul declares every creature of God is good, nothing to be refused — the exact opposite.
- Exodus 20:8: God commands Israel to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Colossians 2:16: Paul says let no man judge you with respect to any holy day or Sabbath days.
- These issues are only confusing and seemingly contradictory if we fail to rightly divide the Word of truth like He tells us to.

L2

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth *The Solution Established*

- God has two distinct and different programs: His program with Israel (the subject matter of most of the books of the Bible) and His program with the Church, the Body of Christ (the subject matter of Paul's epistles).
- 2 Timothy 2:15 — "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." To rightly divide = to recognize and correctly make the division in the Bible because of the two programs.
- The law pertains to Israel's program. Romans 6:14 establishes that we are not under the law but under grace — God has an entirely different system of

operation in effect today.

- 1 Timothy 1:3–7 — Paul warned Timothy about those teaching "other doctrine": men taking things from Israel's program (desiring to be teachers of the law) and teaching them as if they pertained to the Body of Christ today.

L3

Paul's Unique Apostleship — Part 1 *Paul Is Not One of the Twelve*

- Paul's apostleship is special and unique — different from that of the Twelve. Many assume Paul was simply another of the twelve or should have replaced Judas.
- 1 Corinthians 15:5–8 — Paul distinguishes himself from "the twelve." He lists them as eyewitnesses before him, writing "last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."
- The Twelve were chosen and commissioned by the Lord in connection with God's program with Israel, entering its final climactic stages. They are Israel's apostles.
- Matthew 10:5–6 — The Lord commanded the Twelve: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles… But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They were sent to Israel, not to the Gentiles.
- Paul was raised up by God as a brand new apostle by the unexpected personal reappearing of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, as recorded in Acts chapter 9.

L4

Paul's Unique Apostleship — Part 2 *A New and Different Message*

- The Twelve were given the gospel of the kingdom to preach to Israel. God's program with Israel was still in effect and entering its final climactic stages when they were commissioned.
- Paul's message is new and different — so different he calls it "my gospel" and "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25).
- Luke 1:32–33 — The angel Gabriel tells Mary her son shall be given the throne of his father David and reign over the house of Jacob. This is Israel's program.
- Luke 1 (from verse 67) — Zacharias prophesies: the issue is Israel's redemption and salvation and the fulfillment of God's program covenanted with Abraham.
- "Every promise in the book is mine" is not true. All of God's Word is for us to know, but not everything in the Bible is an instruction, command, promise, or injunction for us to follow or claim today.

L5

The Mystery Revealed to Paul *Kept Secret, Now Made Manifest*

- Ephesians 3:1–6 — Paul describes "the dispensation of the grace of God" as something given to him for us Gentiles. He calls it a mystery: "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed."
- The mystery content: "that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians

3:6). This had never been said by God before.

- Colossians 1:25 ff. — "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." The OT prophets were not told about it; the Lord Himself did not say anything about it; therefore the Twelve did not have it.
- God revealed to Paul that He was temporarily suspending His program with Israel and bringing in a new dispensation, in which He would form a new creation, the Body of Christ, for another purpose besides what He will yet fulfill with Israel.
- God does not want us thinking and acting as if Israel's program is in effect today. He tells us to be rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

L6

The Lord's Earthly Ministry *Minister of the Circumcision*

- Romans 15:8 — "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the fathers." Paul uses the past tense — in this dispensation of grace, Christ is not now functioning as a minister of the circumcision.
- Christ's earthly ministry was to Israel (the circumcision), confirming the promises made to the fathers and recorded in the OT prophets. He was not dealing with the mystery, which God had kept hidden.
- Matthew 15:24 — The Lord declared: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He was not functioning as a minister of the Gentiles.
- Christians commonly assume the Gospels pertain to God's program with us today — but this is not what the Bible says. The four Gospel accounts describe the Lord functioning in connection with Israel's program.
- Homogenizing Israel's program with the Body of Christ program by not rightly dividing actually dishonors the Lord.

L7

The Four Gospels as Continuation of the Old Testament *Not the Beginning of a New Dispensation*

- The four Gospels pick up where the Old Testament left off — God's program with Israel is in view in both. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not record the start of God's program with the Body of Christ.
- The Lord lived His earthly ministry under the Law and taught the Law in the Gospels. The New Testament was not even made by God until Christ died on the cross. Therefore the Gospels are in truth part of the Old Testament scriptures.
- The Gospels record the arrival of the final climactic stages of God's program with Israel foretold by the prophets: their Messiah among them and their long-awaited kingdom of heaven proclaimed as at hand.
- Amos 8:11–12 — God prophesied a famine of the hearing of the word of the Lord coming upon Israel — a period of God's silence. This is the period between Malachi and Matthew, represented by the blank page in our Bibles.
- God's silence ended when John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ came on the scene; the Gospels pick up Israel's program where Malachi left it off.

L8

Different Gospels in the Bible *At Least Ten — Not All the Same*

- There are many different gospels (messages of good news) in the Bible — at least ten. They are not all the same and do not all pertain to what God is doing today.
- Two gospels of peace: Isaiah 52 (the peace Israel will experience in their land once God establishes His kingdom) and Ephesians 6 (the peace God has made between Jew and Gentile, having broken down the middle wall of partition of the law and its ordinances). Same label; two completely different gospels.
- Galatians 2:7–8 — Paul recounts that those in Jerusalem recognized he and Peter had been given different gospels: "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter."
- Gospel of the circumcision (Peter and the Twelve): the kingdom of heaven is at hand, for Israel. Gospel of the uncircumcision (Paul): good news for us Gentiles about the dispensation of God's grace and the unsearchable riches of Christ.
- Christians must know which gospel God is proclaiming today and must proclaim the right one.

L9

The Gospel of the Uncircumcision *Reconciliation Freely Offered Today*

- Gospel of the circumcision: kingdom of heaven at hand for Israel; water baptism (a law ordinance) required; signs of the kingdom manifested. This is the gospel of the four Gospels and the opening chapters of Acts.
- Gospel of the uncircumcision (our gospel today): good news about God bringing in a dispensation of His grace for us Gentiles; the unsearchable riches of Christ freely offered because of Christ's redemptive work on the cross and resurrection.
- 2 Corinthians 5:18–21 — The foremost issue in the gospel for today: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Perfect and complete personal reconciliation to God offered as an absolutely free gift to anyone who trusts in Christ.
- This reconciliation also includes promised deliverance from the Lord's coming Day of Wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
- Jew and Gentile alike are offered this reconciliation without any difference whatsoever. Another of the riches of God's grace: we are members of the one new man, the Body of Christ.

L10

Opening Chapters of Acts: Israel's Program Still in Effect — Part 1 *Pentecost Is Not the Church's Birthday*

- The opening chapters of Acts are one of the most misunderstood portions of the Bible. Acts 2 (Pentecost) is commonly called the birthday of the Church and the beginning of this dispensation of grace — this is a misunderstanding.
- God's program with Israel was still in effect on the Day of Pentecost. The events in the opening chapters of the book of Acts all pertain to Israel's program, not to us today.
- Luke 24 — After His resurrection, the Lord made plain to His disciples that

Israel's program would continue following the cross. Israel's rejection of Christ was not a devastating blow — it was a necessary step toward fulfillment.

- It was not until Acts 9 — when the Lord Jesus Christ unexpectedly came back from heaven and raised up Paul as His new apostle — that God suspended His program with Israel and brought in this present dispensation of His grace for us Gentiles.
- Before Acts 9, everything pertained to God's program and dealings with Israel — including the Day of Pentecost.

L11

Opening Chapters of Acts: Israel's Program Still in Effect — Part 2 *God Giving Repentance to Israel*

- Peter on the Day of Pentecost declared that the events of Acts 2 were the beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy about the "last days" of Israel's program — which included the coming Day of the Lord's wrath and great tribulation.
- Acts 5:31 — Peter states plainly what God is doing in the opening chapters of Acts: "for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." God is still dealing with Israel, giving them opportunity to change their mind about the Lord Jesus Christ before the Day of Wrath.
- God gave Israel's leadership three honest opportunities to repent and lead the nation to do the same. The opening chapters of Acts record these three opportunities.
- The activities of the saints at that time are often looked upon as the norm for how we ought to function today. Many call themselves "Pentecostalists" or "Acts 2 dispensationalists," identifying with the events of that time.
- The activities described in the opening chapters of Acts belong to the final stage of God's program with Israel — they have nothing to do with what God is doing today.

L12

Acts 7 and Acts 9: The Point of Crisis and This Dispensation

The Crisis and the Grace That Followed

- Acts 7 records the third and final opportunity God gave Israel's leadership to change their minds about Jesus. Stephen's sermon is this final offer.
- Israel's leadership rejected it: Acts 7:54 — "they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth." They stoned Stephen.
- Acts 7:55–56 — Stephen sees "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The Lord standing (not seated) signifies He is ready to execute His Day of Wrath. The extension of mercy to Israel is concluded.
- Instead of the expected Day of Wrath, Acts 9 records the unexpected: the Lord comes back from heaven and raises up Paul as a brand new apostle — with the message that God is suspending His program with Israel and bringing in the dispensation of His grace for us Gentiles.
- The world stood at the brink of deserved judgment. God gave grace instead. This present dispensation began at the very moment the crisis point had been reached.

L13

Series Summary and Conclusion *Paul the Tentmaker*

- Paul was a tentmaker by trade. He had to rightly divide the goat's hair as well as the cloth into at least two different kinds — some for one part of the tent, some for another. It wouldn't do to mix it all up. The same is true of the word of truth.
- Ephesians 3:1–2 — The dispensation of the grace of God, given to Paul for us Gentiles, began when God raised him up as His brand new apostle in Acts 9. Before that, everything pertained to Israel's program.
- Ephesians 2:11–12 — In time past, Gentiles were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."
- Just about every "ism and schism" that exists among Christians today is the direct result of failing to rightly divide the word of truth — just about every denomination has as its keystone doctrine something that comes from God's program with Israel.
- The command of 2 Timothy 2:15 is the most fundamental and important single command God gives regarding Bible study. Do it and the Bible makes sense.

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

All of the Bible Is for Us to Understand, But Not All of It Is to Us

All of the Bible has been given to us to understand — but not all of it is expressly addressed to or about the members of the Body of Christ today. God has two distinct programs recorded in His Word, each with different instructions, promises, and provisions. Treating the entire Bible as equally applicable to us today results not just in confusion, but in actually dishonoring and disobeying the Lord by following instructions that have nothing to do with what He is doing today.

The Gospel of the Circumcision vs. the Gospel of the Uncircumcision

Peter was given the gospel of the circumcision — the good news that the kingdom of heaven was at hand for Israel, requiring belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ along with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, accompanied by the signs of the kingdom. Paul was given the gospel of the uncircumcision — the good news that God is freely offering complete and perfect reconciliation to Himself through Christ's redemptive work, to Jew and Gentile alike, without law ordinances. These are two different gospels. The gospel of the uncircumcision is God's message for today.

The Lord's Earthly Ministry Belongs to Israel's Program

The four Gospel accounts do not record the beginning of God's program with the Body of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ functioned during His earthly ministry as a minister of the circumcision, confirming the promises made to the fathers (Romans 15:8). He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel

(Matthew 15:24). He taught the Law. Therefore the Gospels are, in truth, part of the Old Testament scriptures — describing the arrival of the final climactic stages the prophets had foretold.

Pentecost Is Not the Birthday of the Church

Acts 2 (the Day of Pentecost) is commonly called the birthday of the Church and the beginning of the present dispensation of grace. This is a misunderstanding. Peter declared on the Day of Pentecost that the events of Acts 2 were the beginning fulfillment of Joel's prophecy about the last days of Israel's program. God was still dealing with Israel throughout the opening chapters of the book of Acts. The present dispensation of grace did not begin until Acts 9, when God raised up Paul as the brand new apostle to whom He revealed it.

Key Scripture References

2 Timothy 2:15	The command to rightly divide the word of truth — the foundational command of the series
Leviticus 11	God's dietary commands to Moses and Aaron — certain meats declared unclean (Israel's program)
1 Timothy 4:3–5	Every creature of God is good, nothing to be refused — Body of Christ today
Exodus 20:8–11	Remember the Sabbath day, keep it holy — given to Israel under the Law
Colossians 2:16	Let no man judge you in respect of the Sabbath days — Body of Christ today
Romans 6:14	We are not under the law but under grace — the system for the Body of Christ
1 Corinthians 15:5–8	Paul distinguishes himself from "the twelve" as one born out of due time
Matthew 10:5–6	The Twelve sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles
Romans 16:25	Paul's gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery
Ephesians 3:1–6	The dispensation of the grace of God given to Paul; the mystery, in other ages not made known, now revealed
Colossians 1:25 ff.	The mystery hid from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to His saints
Romans 15:8	Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to confirm promises made to the fathers
Matthew 15:24	The Lord: I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel
Amos 8:11–12	Prophecy of a famine of the hearing of the word — God's silence to Israel between Malachi and Matthew

Galatians 2:7–8	Gospel of the circumcision committed to Peter; gospel of the uncircumcision to Paul
2 Corinthians 5:18–21	God reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, not imputing trespasses — our gospel today
Acts 5:31	Peter: God exalted Christ with His right hand to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins
Acts 7:54–56	Stephen sees the Son of man standing — God ready to execute His Day of Wrath
Ephesians 2:11–12	In time past, Gentiles without Christ, aliens from Israel, without hope and without God

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"TIME PAST"
(Ephesians 2:11-12)
"BUT NOW"
(Ephesians 2:13)
"TO COME"
(Ephesians 2:7)
ISRAEL "The Circumcision" and "nigh unto God"
THE LAW serves as a "middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14-15)
GENTILES "far off" and "without God in the world"
THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD
(Ephesians 3:1-12)
"Mystery of Christ" is Revealed
"BOTH ONE"
(Ephesians 2:11-14)
THE LORD'S DAY OF WRATH
The "Kingdom of Heaven" is Set Up
Israel's Program is Resumed and Fulfilled
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