

## Distinguishing Things That Are Different

*"Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth."* (2 Timothy 2:15)

What else could these words "correctly cut the word" mean than "pay close attention, and observe the differences found in the word"?

I do not attempt to go into the woods to harvest mushrooms, because I cannot distinguish between a delicious mushroom and a poisonous toadstool. I would harvest both indiscriminately, thereby poisoning my family.

Many churches, preachers and Bible teachers today harvest from God's revelation (the Bible) today indiscriminately, failing to distinguish between things that are clearly different, thereby poisoning their thinking about God (and poisoning the thinking of many church-goers as well).

The biggest problem in the organized church today is a failure to **carefully** study God's word, distinguishing between things that are different. This leads to confusion, which is clearly illustrated by the fact that we have multitudes of different churches today that are teaching drastically different things; yet all are claiming to base their teachings on the Bible.

People today seem more interested in a Bible translation and Bible teachings that are simplified, rather than a translation or teachings that take great care in handling God's word. Bible bookstores are filled with easy to read, simplistic books that make no effort to distinguish between things that are different within God's word.

"Pick any passage you like, anywhere in the Bible, and apply it to yourself! After all, God speaks to us thru His word (the Bible), and all of the Bible is God's word, so you can pick any passage and hear God speaking to you!" This is what many within the church today believe; yet this **simplistic thinking** has led to the confusion found within "The Church" today!

As an example, the teachings concerning hell, a place of eternal torment, have resulted from a failure to distinguish words that are clearly different in the Bible. Our easy-to-read Bible translations make no effort to distinguish between the Greek "hades" (the "unseen"), "gehenna" (the "Valley of Hinnom" outside of Jerusalem) and "tartarus" (a temporary holding place for certain celestial beings). Most translations simply blend all of these together into the single English word "**hell**" ... except in a fair number of cases where our concept of hell cannot apply (since the righteous are there), in which case the translator inserts a word such as "death" or "grave."

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And there is no effort made to distinguish between the Greek “eon, eons, before the eons, the end of the eon, the end of the eons, the eon of the eons, or the eons of the eons.” Because we have been taught since about the 5<sup>th</sup> century that there is an eternal hell where the wicked will go, most translators today simply blend all of these variations together into the English word “**eternal**” ... except in cases where this cannot be (such as “the end of eternity” or “before eternity”), in which case another word is inserted that seems to make better sense ... like age or ages.

With your easy-to-read English Bible translation you get more than just a translation ... it is an interpretation. Unless you use a more literal translation (like the Concordant Version), much of God’s truth is lost, and theology is based upon a faulty translation that fails to distinguish between words that are clearly different in God’s revelation to us.

To go a step further, there are also many things that are distinguishable, even in the common easy-to-read Bible translations ... but most churches, preachers and Bible teachers make no effort to distinguish between them.

When God speaks specifically to Israel, many today teach that He is speaking to “The Church.” But study carefully and you will observe a difference between Israel and the Church!

When God speaks of His Kingdom to come upon the earth (as in the teachings of Jesus), this is clearly different from our concept of Heaven.

Study carefully and observe the differences between:

- Israel versus Gentiles
- Kingdom versus Heaven
- Kingdom versus Church
- Law versus Grace (often mixed together in today’s churches)
- Pardon versus Justification
- Gospel of Circumcision versus Gospel of Uncircumcision
- Regeneration (born again) versus New Creation
- Tree of Life versus Immortality

The problem is that today we start with a theology, and then read the Bible in light of that theology. If one finds himself within a Methodist church, he will have been taught by its preachers and teachers about Wesleyan theology ... and he will now see the Bible from that perspective. If, on the other hand, one finds himself within a Reformed church, or the Roman Catholic church, or a charismatic church ... he will now see the Bible from that perspective. Thus ... many different teachings from the same Bible!

Better that we should cast off the bias that we have learned from **any** specific brand of Christianity ... study the word of God for ourselves using a translation that enables us to distinguish between things that are clearly different, and develop our thinking about God directly from His word.

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- Bob Evely -