

Discernment means separation. Behold, distinguish, observe and perceive may also be used in the definition of DISCERNMENT.

As an adjective, discernment carries the idea of knowing, to be perceptive and wise.

There are many beliefs about Christianity out there. The differences are not about the Person of Jesus, but rather, how and when His work is applied to believers; i.e., before baptism or after; before church membership or after, etc.

Discernment is needed if we are to RIGHTLY DIVIDE the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15). Scripture and present day practices must be separated, if discernment comes.

To do this, Churches have 'Articles of Faith.' Each Article, separated from the rest, give us a doctrinal position; a set of Scriptural Teachings. Local Missionary Baptists Churches have almost the same wording in their Articles of Faith, yet, some how, manage to differ enough to cause division among their churches.

Some topics, within the Bible, are easy to discern. For example, there is a heaven and a place called Hell. The Bible clearly says some go to heaven (saved) and some are cast into the lake of fire (unsaved). But, we must have discernment for other teachings; such as, baptism, church membership, Kingdom, and other vital doctrines in God's Word.

"Comparing Scripture with Scripture" (I Cor 2:13) is the only way to come to a full understanding. When this happens, you will find yourself in the Lord's Church. She, alone, was given "The Keys to the Kingdom" (Mt 16:19).

Importantly, each teaching must be checked with another teaching and harmonize with it-the one teaching, supporting the other. While, we find baptism in the Word, nowhere is infant baptism recorded; nowhere can we find an infant being baptized.

Discernment helps us separate (rightly divide), keeping us from BUNCHING or LUMPING every teaching into an all inclusive doctrine. There is no universal salvation- not everyone will be saved. Neither, is there a universal church. Those, who are saved do not, automatically, become church members. Baptism must be administered. It is, not only a Church ordinance, it is also part of the great commission of Matthew 28:19-20. Baptism is necessary before one is a member of the Lord's body, the church.

Landmark Missionary Baptist believe that one is saved by grace through faith and baptized by immersion. A believer also serves within the local congregation, the church. Yet, Baptist do have their BUNCHES, too, trying to lump all things into one. Lately, some are teaching a Baptist Bride. They mean, I think, if one gets baptized by Baptists and belongs to a Baptist Church, he will be guaranteed to be in the Bride of Christ. But, the churches in Revelation dismiss this idea. Especially, the church of Sardis. "But, you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy," 3:4.

Another teaching that lumps and bunches all into one category is Calvinism. Is it correct to place all the saved into, what Calvinists call, the ELECT? It is discerning teaching to call all the saved the ELECT, while all the lost end up in Hell? Are there but two places?

Jean Chauvin, John Calvin (1509-1564) was a genius who, at an early age, wrote volumes on Theology. His teaching on Predestination is the most notable. Interesting, many Baptists try to distance themselves from the man, while holding on to his teaching of Predestination.

It is enlightening to view John Calvin's Theology within the time that he lived. In Calvin's

day, there were but two classes of people on the social scale - the RICH and the POOR. Until Calvin was born, the POOR served the RICH under the belief that salvation would be granted to them if they were faithful to their masters, working hard for them.

But, when PREDESTINATION hit the pulpit, it was accepted by the poor with glee. They stopped working. Theology had turned 180 degrees around with this new doctrine because, the poor folk deducted that, if everyone is predestinated, we need not work so hard nor be so faithful. Work stopped.

The ruling class got real nervous and all over Calvin, at the same time. His teaching caused a virtual work stoppage. Production went way down and the economy was in trouble. It became clear that Predestination had to be re-worked and re-explained.

Calvin did this by marrying works and predestination. His restatement of the doctrine was masterful and, it produced the desired outcome. Neo-Predestination said that a predestinated person will be one who works hard and is faithful to his master. Thus, as in all man-made doctrine, Works had to come to the rescue. Predestination was REWORKED and the poor went back to work in order to prove their predestinated calling. Religion and commerce were, once again, a happy, elected, bunch of people.

This subject of PREDESTINATION requires much study and discernment. There are many fine brethren on both sides of this issue-brethren who believe in the local church and practice the exact same church teachings of: Salvation by grace alone; baptism by immersion only; and the church - a local independent body of saved, baptized believers, covenanting together to serve God.

Salvation IS by GRACE, alone. However, grace does not stop at the cross. Neither does predestination take over after one goes to the cross. Ananias told Saul to “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name,” Acts 22:16. We know what Saul did, but we also know that not every saved person is baptized. Others are baptized, but not according to Scripture, which is by the authority of a New Testament Church.

Peter’s message in Acts 2:38 helps us discern, as well. “Repent... be baptized...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Both Saul and Peter demonstrate that repentance and baptism are necessary before one may serve the Lord.

In conclusion, discernment doesn’t bunch, but rather separates. While Salvation may be considered to be one doctrine, many teachings are within the salvation plan. One may be saved from condemnation, but not save his life, something that is clearly seen in Noah’s case, detailing that only eight souls were saved. Further, Jesus taught that, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven,” Matthew 7:21.

Listen to the discerning words of verse 22, “Many will say to Me on that day...” THAT DAY means the day of the Lord, the Millennium Reign, the time that Jesus returns to rule the earth. The lost, however, will not be raised nor judged, for another thousand years. Therefore, to be discerning and Scriptural, it is clear that not all of those saved, are to be placed into a bunch of people known as the “elect.”