

## What's going on?

Much of what is happening in current Christendom is described in Amos 9:9 "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as *grain* is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth." (ASV) People are leaving their churches in droves, and that is across all denominations, too! Why? Simple - the teachings have strayed miles off course and been watered down till they are merely a flavoring of the intended meal.

If you are going to learn, or teach, the Bible you can't ignore sections because they embarrass you or make you self conscious or feel silly. Every single word between those covers is there for a specific purpose and not by accident. There is nothing there that is outdated, or no longer in effect. That won't happen till the Kingdom is fully established and Satan is consigned to the lake of fire for all eternity.

People say that God doesn't change. Well, I hate to tell ya, but that is only half true. His character is what remains the same throughout all time. His essence is the same today as it was when he spoke everything into existence. What is continually changing is the way he enacts that character in trying to guide us in life and preparation for eternity with Him. Religion is, and has always been man made. God is looking for relationship, not ritual. The proof of that is seen in the pre-fall garden of Eden. Jesus also spoke of the Pharisees' harsh rules that they made, and were not God given.

How does all that apply to the opening statements? I believe it's time for a harvest. The churches as a whole are being shaken, or sifted, throughout the world. The chaff and dirt and other seed will be separated out, but as it says - "not the least kernel will fall upon the earth". God will keep and nurture the true believers, depicted as kernels in that verse, and the mere church goes and worse, will be left to conflict and death. Please don't take my word for it. Verse 10 reads - "All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, The evil shall not overtake nor meet us." (ASV)

The 'house of Israel' traditionally refers to the Jews of the Old Testament as God's favored people, however in the New Testament Christians are included within that category. We see all through the Bible where the 'house of Israel' gets spanked by God because they strayed too far for too long, despite His Efforts to lead them back. I believe that we're rapidly heading in the direction of another major spanking or possibly worse, when you stand back and consider the whole scope of events worldwide.

God has let segments of his people perish time and time again because of their refusal to repent and return to Him. There has always been a way to avoid His Wrath too. At the time of the Egyptian plagues and Pharaoh just before the exodus, it became known as the Passover, whereby blood was put on the door frames of the devout to signal the plague not to enter that particular house. In this day and time there is also a route to preservation and I think it's expressed very well in 2Timothy 2:15. Presented here in four different translations so that you can get a broad appreciation of what the verse says –

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (ESV)

"be diligent to present thyself approved to God--a workman irreproachable, rightly dividing the word of the truth;" (YLT)

"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." (ASV)

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

You might ask what the phrase ‘rightly handling or dividing’ means. The Greek word that is translated as dividing or handling is ‘orthotomeō’ and it’s defined in The New Testament Greek Lexicon as:

1. to cut straight, to cut straight ways
  - a. to proceed on straight paths, hold a straight course, equiv. to doing right
2. to make straight and smooth, to handle aright, to teach the truth directly and correctly

According to that lexicon, this is a compound word and only found in this one instance - think it might be significant? So to put it very simply - we are to diligently study God’s word and not mess it up. Diligently study means to gain a thorough knowledge of, by way of repeated investigation of all aspects of it. It does not mean a general survey of the high points. Definition #2 above lays it all out and reveals a note respect is intended to accompany your efforts. It ain’t the Sunday funny papers you’re holdin here! The bible is written to provide a layered understanding of God and how we are to live and mature as his servants. God and his intent is reveled just as efficiently to the newest believer as it is to the seasoned disciple. It’s not meant to be manhandled or mutilated or reassembled to suit us or any given position we’re trying to espouse. Going back to the original languages and meanings of the words when written is necessary and sometimes quite enlightening. Once in a while you’ll run across a word whose definition is radically different now from what it was then. That adds a touch of intrigue and fun to it.

Throughout this process you’ll be developing a real relationship with the Lord and God himself - and that’s the whole purpose of life. Imagine having a conversation with the Father of everything, and hearing of his concern for you and your well being, as well as his love for you as an individual and his child..... It’s possible and available to anyone who opens their heart, and His heart - the Bible.