

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **BIBLE AUTHORITY**

### **Lesson 3**

#### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to our study on Bible authority. This is the third lesson in this study. In this lesson we are going to be talking about the subject of the Old Testament and the New Testament. What does the Bible have to say about the Old Testament and the New Testament? There is a lot of confusion surrounding this topic. You have some who say, "We are to go by the whole Bible." Others say, "We should follow only the Old Testament (the First Covenant)." Then someone else says, "No, we are to follow the New Testament (the Second Covenant)." What does the Bible say? Some people say, "There are certain Bible passages that talk about stoning our children if they misbehave. Is that something we are supposed to do?" There are passages in the Old Testament that say a lot of different things. People ask, "Are we really supposed to be doing these things?" That is a good question. We will be looking at the differences in the Old and New Testaments, and what the Bible teaches regarding both of them.

First, we need to establish that all Scripture has been given to us by God. Both the Old and New Testaments are intended to better us as Christians. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read,

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Yes, the whole Bible has been given to us by God. But the question is: How do we "rightly divide" the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15)? I want to begin by talking about the First Covenant (or First Testament or Old Testament). When was this Covenant given? Notice what 1 Kings 8:9 says: "Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt." The covenant being discussed in 1 Kings 8:9 is considered as the First (or Old) Covenant. When did God make this covenant with people? He made it after He led Israel out of Egyptian bondage. That is when the First Covenant was made. In the book of Genesis, we see certain agreements that God made with either individuals or groups of people. But according to 1 Kings 8:9, this was the first actual covenant between God and a nation (Israel; Deut. 4:13; Ex. 12). The Old Covenant was given after the Israelites came out of Egyptian bondage.

The next question is: To whom was the First Covenant given? It was given to the Jews. This covenant was not given to Christians or just to everyone. Deuteronomy 5:1-5 makes this very clear.

"Moses called all Israel, and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain."

To whom was this covenant given? The Bible says that the First Covenant was not given to the Jews' ancestors. It was not a covenant made with those mentioned in the Book of Genesis. It was not a covenant made with Adam, Abel, Noah, or others about whom we read in Genesis. It was a covenant given only to physical Israel. Was it given to the Gentile nations? Ephesians 2:11-13 says that it was not. The Gentiles were considered as foreigners and strangers in regard to this covenant (Eph. 2:19). Why was this the case? It was because this covenant was not given to them. Romans 2:14 plainly teaches that the Gentiles did not have access to the First Covenant. It was not for them, and it was not made with them. The First Covenant was not given to everyone (or even to Christians). It was given to physical Israel when God led them out of Egypt into the wilderness.

Another passage that plainly teaches that this covenant was between God and physical Israel is Psalm 147:19-20—"He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel." Before I read verse 20, I want to stop right here. To whom were God's statutes and judgments given? They were given to the house of Jacob (physical Israel). In verse 20 the Bible says, "He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them." How much clearer could it be than what is found in Psalm 147:19-20? This passage makes it clear that God's First Covenant was given only to physical Israel. The other nations did not know this covenant because God did not give it to them. It is important that we understand the people to whom the First Covenant was given because when we are speaking about commands, we need to ask, "To whom did God give this particular command?" When we consider the command for Noah to build an ark, was the command from God? Yes. But to whom was the command given? Was it a command given to Israel or to Christians? No. It was a command given only to Noah. To whom was the First Covenant given? It was given to physical Israel.

Colossians 2:14 shows that the First Covenant has been blotted out. We no longer are under the First Covenant. In fact, we have never been under this covenant according to the Bible, since it was made only with physical Israel. Colossians 2:14 says, "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Why did the Lord take the First Covenant out of the way? The reason is because it was "contrary to" the Jews. How was it contrary to the Jews? The Bible teaches that no man could be truly justified by the First Covenant (Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:11). The Bible also teaches that no man could bear the First Covenant, because it was a yoke that was put upon the Jews (Acts 15:10). The Bible teaches that the Jews were "held by" the First Covenant (Rom. 7:6). The Bible teaches that righteousness could not come through the First Covenant (Gal. 2:21; 3:21). Nothing could be made perfect through the First Covenant (Heb. 7:19). This is why the covenant was "contrary to" the Jews. But why were these things true? Why could no one be justified by the First Covenant? Why could they not bear it? Why were they held by it? Why could righteousness not come by the First Covenant? Why could nothing be made perfect by it? It was because the First Covenant did not include the blood of Jesus Christ. It pointed toward the blood of Jesus, which was one of its purposes, as we will see shortly. But it did not include the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:22). There must be shedding of blood. According to Hebrews 10:4 the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins. The First Covenant did not include the precious blood of Jesus Christ. It only pointed toward it. That is why the covenant was against the Jews.

What was the purpose of the First Covenant? We understand that this covenant was given to physical Israel. But why did God give this covenant in the first place? That is a good question. In fact, it is a question that the Christians in Galatia asked the apostle Paul. They wanted to know, "If we're no longer under it, what's the point?" Galatians 3:19-25 says,

“What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

What was the purpose of the First Covenant? It was given because of sin—so that people could know what sin was. It was a tutor to bring us to Christ. We no longer are under the Old Law; it was a tutor that brought us to Christ. The law was not against the promises of God, because it was part of God’s plan to establish one law that would bring a greater law. Hebrews 10:9-10 teaches,

“Then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

This explains the purpose of the Old Law. It was God’s will that Jesus come through this law so that He could be born under the Law (Gal. 4:4), take away the Law, and establish a New Covenant—a better covenant—under which we can be justified and saved. The Bible plainly teaches that the First Covenant has been done away with. Hebrews 8:6-9 says,

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them,’ says the Lord.”

A New Covenant was going to be made that was not according to the First Covenant. That one has been taken out of the way. We now have a new and better covenant. Another passage I want us to examine is found in 2 Corinthians 3:7-9, where Paul refers to Exodus 34:29-35 where it speaks of Moses’ face shining after He had been in God’s presence on Mt. Sinai.

“But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?”

The New Covenant was more glorious than the Old Covenant. Was the Old Covenant glorious? Sure it was. But it was something that was meant to pass away (and that has passed away). The New Covenant is what remains. Paul then continued, “For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels.” It was called a “ministry of condemnation” because it was “contrary to” the Jews, in that it did not include the blood of Jesus. It pointed people toward Christ, but did not include Christ’s blood. Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 3:10-14,

“For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses,

who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ.”

This is what Hebrews 10:9 says: Christ “takes away the first that He may establish the second.” The First Covenant has been done away with.

Now let’s talk about the New Covenant, which was always a part of God’s plan. It was prophesied, and always has been part of God’s eternal plan. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 Jeremiah said,

“‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,’ says the Lord. ‘But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ says the Lord. ‘For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”

This was a prophecy about the future New Covenant. Jeremiah said that a time would come when there would be a New Covenant that would not be like the Old Covenant. The New Covenant will not be made with physical Israel, but with spiritual Israel. Anyone could be included in the New Covenant. Anyone could obey it. In Romans 1:16 Paul said that the New Covenant was for the Jew first, but also for the Greek. Unlike the Old Covenant, the New Covenant is for all people. All people can be saved, be part of the Covenant, and be saved. It is for both Jews and Gentiles. But we must be obedient to it. The First Covenant served as a divider between the Jewish nation and everyone else. Jesus took that division away (Eph. 2:14-18) so that both Jews and Gentiles would have the same covenant.

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

That was not the case under the First Covenant because Gentiles were “strangers” and “far away.” But through the death of Christ they have been brought near. No longer are they considered as strangers (Gal. 3:27-28). Jews and Gentiles, males and females, black and white—it does not matter because we all can go to Heaven. We can all be included in the New Covenant if we are obedient to what God has said.

What does the New Covenant contain? We are talking about the New Testament. Hebrews 2:1ff. speaks of the things that at first were spoke by the Lord and then confirmed by those who heard Him. Inspired writers wrote down things for us so that we can have access to “the faith once for all delivered” (Jude 3). In Luke 16:16 we read, “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” This is a spiritual kingdom, and everyone is “pressing into it.” In Mark 9:1 Jesus said that there were some people to whom He was speaking who would still be alive when the kingdom of God came (see Mt. 16:18-19). Luke 16:15-16 teaches that Christ taught what He did in preparation of the coming of the church (the kingdom). In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and teach the

Gospel, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” The things that Jesus taught regarding the church (kingdom) are to continue to be taught. That is where we get the New Covenant (the Word of God, the Bible; Acts 2 through Revelation). If we want to go and study, this is where we should go and study. It is the Law that we are under and that speaks to us today (Rom. 3:19).

Some people say, “Since we are under the New Covenant, is there any need to read and study the Old Testament?” Some people suggest that Christians do not follow the whole Bible because they do not follow the Old Testament any longer. However, because the Bible teaches us that we no longer are under the Old Covenant, then it no longer is authoritative for us today. But can we still learn and benefit from the Old Testament? Yes, we can. We can study it to see how God dealt with people in the past. The Old Covenant reveals the nature of God. No, we are not under the Old Covenant. But we still can learn lessons to help us live better lives under the New Covenant. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul was talking about how Israel had failed because of their sexual immorality. In verse 11 he said that those people had become examples for us today. Paul was not saying that we are still under the Old Covenant’s authority, but instead that we can learn lessons from it. Just as under the Old Covenant, there were people who failed through disobedience, we, too, can fall. In 1 Corinthians 10:12 Paul wrote, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” Here we have an example of Paul using the Old Testament, not because it was still authoritative (as when the Old Testament said that certain disobedient children should be stoned), but because it showed that when certain people were disobedient, they fell away. So, we who are under the New Law must be obedient to the things God has commanded us to do. And if we are not, then just as some fell who became involved in sexual immorality, so we, too, can fall if we are not taking heed. In Romans 15:4 Paul said, “Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” We can see that the Old Law reveals to us the nature of God. We definitely can learn from it. Another example is Noah’s ark. Someone might say, “I’ve never been given a command to build an ark.” Of course you haven’t. But can’t you study about Noah’s ark and become a better Christian? Romans 15:4 says you can. Genesis 6-8 talks about the faith that Noah possessed. No, we will not be building an ark today because God has not commanded us to do that. But if we get discouraged, we can read Genesis 6-8 and say, “Noah still stuck with God, even when it was difficult and everyone except for his family seemed to be opposed to him. Just like Noah, I am going to remain faithful.” That is how we use the Old Testament. Should we study it? Absolutely! It is Scripture. It can teach us something. But it does not speak regarding what our authority is today. We are not under the Old Covenant. We go to the New Testament as our authority. We go to the Old Testament to better understand the nature of God and to live our Christian lives in a better manner.

What would happen if people were to use the Old Testament as their authority? The Bible teaches in Galatians 5:4 that if we were to do that, then we would have “fallen from grace.” That is why it is vital for us to go to the New Testament to see what we must do. And that is where we must go to see what a person must do to become a Christian. The Bible teaches that we need salvation (Jn. 14:6). Only through Jesus Christ can we have that salvation. Should we go to the Old Testament and offer animal sacrifices or burn incense as those people did? Absolutely not—because we are not under that covenant. We must go to the New Covenant since it is the law under which we live today. So what does the Bible say?

In Acts 2, when the kingdom (church) began, certain people asked, "What must we do to be saved?" (vs. 37). Peter responded by saying, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." If you have yet to obey the truth, we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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### STUDY QUESTIONS FOR BIBLE AUTHORITY (LESSON 3)

1. What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 say about “all Scripture”?
2. What did the apostle Paul mean when he instructed Timothy to “rightly divide the word of truth”?
3. According to 1 Kings 8:9 and Haggai 2:5, with whom did God make the covenant that began at Mount Sinai during the time of Moses?
4. Did Gentiles (non-Jews) live under the covenant that God established at Mount Sinai?
5. According to Psalm 147:19-20, to whom was God’s “First Covenant” given?
6. According to Colossians 2:14 and Ephesians 2:14-15, is the First Covenant still in effect today?
7. According to Acts 13:39 and Galatians 3:11, what could the First Covenant **not** do?
8. According to Hebrews 10:4, why did the First Covenant need to be replaced by the Second Covenant?
9. What, according to Galatians 3:19-25, was one of the purposes of the First Covenant?
10. What does Hebrews 10:9-10 have to say about the First Covenant?
11. What does Hebrews 8:7 say?
12. According to 2 Corinthians 3:10-11, which covenant is “more glorious”—the First or the Second?
13. According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, what had always been a part of God’s plan?
14. According to the apostle Paul’s comments in Romans 1:16, for whom is the Second Covenant intended?
15. According to Jude 3, what does the Second Covenant contain?
16. According to Luke 16:16, the Second Covenant proclaimed the arrival of something. What was it?
17. What did Jesus say in Mark 9:1 about “the kingdom”?
18. According to Matthew 16:18-19, what is another name for “the kingdom”?
19. According to Galatians 5:4, what happens to people today who attempt to remain under the First Covenant?
20. According to Romans 15:4, what is one good reason for us to study the First Covenant?