

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

COLOSSIANS LESSON 2 **(Chapter 2)**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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

This is the second lesson in our study of the Book of Colossians. In this lesson we will be dealing with the important question, "What law are we under today?" If a person was to pick up his Bible and start reading, he would recognize that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament. There is some confusion on this subject today. Some suggest that we are to fulfill every single commandment that is found in the Bible. But is that really the case? I once heard someone say, "If every single commandment was given to you, then where is your ark?" We understand that there are certain commandments in the Bible that were not given to us today because we are not under that law or covenant. Today we need to ask ourselves, "What covenant/law are we under today, and what do we need to be obeying?" Think about a speed zone. If you were going down the road, and the speed limit used to be 70 miles per hour where you once lived. But all of a sudden, about five years ago the speed limit changed to 55 miles per hour. Suppose you did not realize that there was a change, and you continued driving down the road at 70 miles per hour. A police officer pulls you over, and you say, "But officer, I thought the speed limit was 70 miles per hour." You were still going by the old law, and by what used to be, but not what is for you today. What law is in operation for us today? What covenant are we under today?

We need to understand that the Old Law was not given to us. It was a covenant that was never made with us in an authoritative sense. In Exodus 34:27-28 we read,

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.' So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandment."

We see, then, that this was not a covenant given to us today. It was a covenant given to physical Israel. In 1 Kings 8:9 we are told that "nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone [the Ten Commandments] 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." Some people say that the Ten Commandments were given to us, and that we still should be following them today because they were separate from the rest of the Law. According to 1 Kings 8:9, they were one and the same. The Ten Commandments were part of the Old Covenant. In Hebrews 9:1-5 we see that the Ten Commandments were considered as part of the Old Law (which was not given to us).

"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant [the Ten Commandments]."

The Ten Commandments were considered as part of the Old Covenant. The Old Law was not given to us. It was a covenant between God and physical Israel. Nehemiah 9:13-15 speaks to this point when it says,'

“You came down also on Mount Sinai, and spoke with them [Israel] from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments. You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes, and laws by the hand of Moses Your servant. You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger, and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst, and told them to go in to possess the land Which You had sworn to give them.”

Here we see that the Old Law was made known to Israel (Exodus 16-20) at Mt. Sinai. It was given to Israel as a covenant. We cannot say that we are under the Old Law because we were never under the Old Law. It was never given to us. These passages are very clear regarding the people to whom the Mosaic Law was given. But if there is any doubt in anyone's mind, Deuteronomy 5:1-3 will clear it up.

“And 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.’”

Some say that the Old Law was given all the way back in Genesis, and that the Sabbath was given all the way back to Creation for the people to keep as holy. The Bible says that the covenant was not made with their fathers. Who were their fathers? It is speaking of Abraham and those patriarchs (of whom we read in the Book of Genesis) who came before the people of Israel. Never once, in the Book of Genesis, did anyone observe Saturday as a holy day. Nehemiah 9 says that it was not even given to them to keep until Exodus 16-20. In Deuteronomy 5:1-3 Moses said that the Law was not given to those in the Garden. It was not given to those of whom we read in the Book of Genesis. It was given to physical Israel as a covenant made between Israel and God. Thus, the first point that we must understand is that we have never been under the Old Law as a type of authority. Yes, we can learn from the Old Law so that we do not make the same mistakes that others before us did. We can learn about the nature of God. But the Old Law is not what we follow today. We do not offer the sacrifices that were made under the Old Law. We do not observe the feast days that people back then observed. We do not keep the same commandments that they kept (such as those that required certain people to be stoned, etc.). Those types of commands were never given to us. The Old Covenant was not made with us, but was made between God and physical Israel.

The second point we need to understand is that the Old Law itself speaks of a time when a New Law/Covenant would appear. The Old Covenant said that it was not meant to last forever, and that there would be a New Covenant/Law. In Jeremiah 31:31-32 we read,

“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.”

What is Jeremiah prophesying? Even the Old Covenant itself said that it would not last forever. Rather, there would be a time when the New Law would come, and when a New Covenant would be put in place that was “not according to the covenant” that was given in Exodus 20. It would be a New Law. In Hebrews 8:13 we read, “In that He says, ‘a new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” The writer of Hebrews said that in the time of Jeremiah the Old Covenant was “growing old,” and that there would be a time when it would vanish. Thus, the Old Covenant itself speaks of a time when it no longer would exist, and when a New Covenant would replace it.

The third point that we need to understand is that something took the Old Covenant away. When was the Old Covenant done away with? Who took it away? In Luke 16:16 we are told, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it." When we look at Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the gospel accounts), we see that people were still living under the Old Law, but were preparing for the New Covenant. The kingdom was being preached. In Galatians 4:4 we are told that Christ was born under the Old Law. We know that people during the time of the events in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were living under the Old Law, which is why Christ fulfilled it perfectly when He did not sin in any way. However, what were the people preparing for and looking forward to? It was the New Covenant, and the kingdom that soon was to come at that point. The kingdom was being preached, and the people were looking forward to its arrival. In Hebrews 9:16 we read, "Where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." Why did Christ come to Earth? It was to shed His blood, and to bring the New Covenant. But before the New Law could go into effect, what had to happen? There had to be the death of the testator of the New Law—Christ. It was Jesus' death on the cross that took away the Old Law. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." Some people have asked, "If Jesus came to bring a New Covenant and to take away the Old, why did Jesus say in Matthew 5:17 that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets?" What does it mean when Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets? He did not say that what was going on under the Old Law was bad or against the promises. Galatians 3 says that it was not against the promises. It was the things that were prophesied that Christ came to fulfill. That is what brought Christ into the world. The timing was perfect. He was born "in due season," and came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. One of those prophecies was that Christ was going to shed His blood and die in order to bring a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-32). One of the prophecies that He came to fulfill was that there was to be a New Covenant. Thus, the Law was not against Christ, but was what prophesied Christ. We must understand that one of the things foretold in the Old Law was that Christ would come in order to bring a New Law. In Hebrews 10:9 we read, "Then He said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second." The first covenant was between God and physical Israel. It prophesied Christ's arrival, and fulfilled what it was supposed to do. Christ eventually came to take away the first covenant in order to establish the second covenant. This is very important because some people get confused when Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. He did not come to destroy; He came to fulfill. He took away the first so that He could establish the New Covenant.

In Colossians 2:14 we read, "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 was it against us or contrary to us? It was because the blood of bulls and goats could never have taken away sin. The Old Law, in and of itself, never could have taken away sin. It condemned. Christ came so He could fulfill the Old Law and bring the New Law. That is how it was against us. Christ took it out of the way, "having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:15-17). Here we see the importance of understanding that Christ nailed the Old Law to the cross. His death took away the Old Law. There must be the death of a testator before a new covenant can be in place. Christ nailed the Old Law to the cross when He died. In Ephesians 2:14-18 we are told,

“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.”

Under the New Covenant, everyone can be saved the same way. No longer is it a covenant between just God and physical Israel (or Gentile proselytes). Now all people can be in the body of Christ and be saved. Why? It is because of Christ's death and because of the New Covenant that He gave us. In Hebrews 9:15 the Bible says, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Before the Old Law could be done away with (and the New Law brought forth), Christ had to die. It was essential. There had to be the death of the testator. Who took away the Old Law? Only Christ could have done that. He did that. He came to Earth to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies, live a perfect life, die on the cross, and nail the Old Covenant to the cross so that He could make a New Covenant with His people today (Christians or saints or disciples who are in His church).

The third point we need to examine can be seen by asking when the kingdom went forth. This was something that was prophesied in Scripture. In Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4, and Daniel 2, we see prophecies speaking about the New Covenant and the kingdom. When was this to happen? In Acts 2 is when it happened. The law went forth in Acts 2. In Acts 2:21 we read that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” We understand, of course, that to call on the name of the Lord means that we must obey Him, not just say, “Lord, Lord.” We must do what He says (Lk. 6:46). When did the New Law go forth? It went forth in Acts 2. In Galatians 5:6 we read, “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” There are three key words here: “faith working through love.” This is the law we are under today. We are not under circumcision or uncircumcision. We are not under those Old Testament ordinances. We are under “faith working through love.” If there is any verse that describes how the New Covenant works, it would be Galatians 5:6. The first we see is “faith.” In Hebrews 11:6 we see how “without faith it is impossible to please God.” We must have faith. But notice what kind of faith. It must be a working faith (Jas. 2:24-26). Faith without works is dead. We must not have only a faith, but a working faith—a faith that has works combined with obedience. What is the motivation of our faith? It is love. We must do all things with love (1 Cor. 13). We must truly love God. If we do, we will keep His commandments. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” The literal translation of that would be, “If you love Me, you **will** keep My commandments.” In 1 John 5:3 we read, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” In 2 John 6 we are told, “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” We must have a faith that works through love.

In Hebrews 8:13 we learn that we are under the New Covenant—the Law of Christ. We are under a law. Some people say, “The Bible says that we are no longer under law, but only grace.” We are no longer under the Old Law. And we are under grace. But today we are still under a law—Galatians 6:2, “the law of Christ” (1 Thess. 2:13; Jn. 12:48). The things that we will be judged by will not be the Mosaic Law. God will not ask us on the Day of Judgment, “How many animal sacrifices did you offer?,” “Did you keep this ordinance?,” or “Did you keep that Old Testament ordinance?” We are under the New Law—the Law of Christ. It is what we must obey. It sometimes is called “the law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). In James 1:25 and James 2:12 it is called “the law of liberty.” It is a law of free-

dom. We are free in the sense that we no longer have to make the same types of sacrifices that people under the Old Law had to make. But we still must abide in the law—not the Old Law (the Mosaical Law), but the New Law of Christ (Jn. 12:48). There is a law that we are under today. It is the New Covenant.

Why is it important for us to understand this? Some people believe that it is no big deal, and suggest that people should be able to believe what they want to believe. If they want to obey some Old Testament laws, that is fine. Here's the problem with that. We cannot justify things we do today by saying that people did such things under the Old Covenant. Some people today say that we are still to observe the Sabbath because they did that under the Old Covenant. But the same people who say that we should observe the Sabbath have a problem when it comes to people who do not observe it. Those people, under the Old Law, were supposed to be killed. If there are people today who are not observing the Sabbath, why is it that people who believe people should observe the Sabbath are not fulfilling the commandment to kill such people? It is because they realize that they no longer are under the Old Law. They just want to "pick and choose" some of the things from the Old Law. You may be saying, "Aren't nine out of the Ten Commandments still in effect for us today?" Yes, they are. But we do not follow them because of the fact that they were given to Israel. We follow them because they are included in the New Covenant. We do not worship on the Sabbath. We do not come together to observe Saturday as the holy Sabbath. That was done away with when the Old Law was nailed to the cross. Today we come together on the first day of the week to remember Christ's shed blood and His sacrifice for us. We no longer are under the Old Covenant (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11). Sometimes people like to say, "Well, in the Old Testament they did this." Using mechanical instruments in worship to God is something that was very popular during the Old Testament. Today people are trying to go back to that and say, "Well, if they did it in the Old Testament, surely it's OK." If a person is going to do that, then he must take all of the Old Law. But we know that the Old Law has been done away with. Galatians 5:4 tells us that if we try to be justified (or find authority for the things we do) under the Old Law, then we will fall from grace. We cannot be justified by things done under the Old Law. We are under the New Law, and must find under that Law authority for the things we do. The Old Law is not a covenant for us. We must realize what law we today are under so that we can follow it and be sure that we are following the New Testament. Some of those laws include worshiping God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24). We are to take the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). We need to make sure that we walking in the light and living faithfully (1 Jn. 1:7-9; Rev. 2:10). We need to be sure that we are good, moral people. We need to be sure that we are practicing sound doctrine in everything we do.

Another thing that was done under the Old Law that is not included in the New Covenant is tithing. You may hear preachers speaking about tithing today. That was never given to Christians. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we learn that we are supposed to give on the first day of the week as we have been prospered. We cannot give that much if we do not have that much. We can give only what we have. Never is a tithing law found under the New Covenant. That was included in the Old Covenant for physical Israel.

Are you following the New Covenant? Are you following the laws given to us today in the New Testament? If you are not a Christian, you need to hear what the Word has to say. You must believe. You must repent. You must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Rom. 10:10). And you must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). 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 COLOSSIANS LESSON 2 (CHAPTER 2)

1. What are the two major divisions of the Bible?
2. According to Exodus 34:27, to whom was the Old Covenant intended?
3. According to Deuteronomy 5:1-3, to whom was the Old Covenant **not** given?
4. According to Nehemiah 9:13, what did the Old Covenant contain?
5. What important prophecy is found in Jeremiah 31:31-32?
6. What, according to Hebrews 8:13, did God have planned for people in the future (that is, for people who lived beyond the Old Covenant)?
7. What important point about the New Law is found in Hebrews 9:16?
8. According to Luke 16:16, “the Law and the Prophets” lasted up to a certain time. What was that time, according to this verse?
9. According to Luke 16:16, what replaced “the Law and the Prophets”?
10. According to Luke 16:16, what kind of response did the replacement of “the Law and the Prophets” receive among the people of that day?
11. What important statement did Jesus make in Matthew 5:17?
12. According to Hebrews 10:9 Jesus said that He had come to do something. What was that “something”?
13. According to Hebrews 10:0, Jesus came to take away something and replace it with something else. What was that “something else”?
14. What, according to Colossians 2:14, did Jesus do in regard to the Old Law?
15. Colossians 2:15-17 discusses something that was “a shadow.” To what was the word “shadow” referring?
16. Colossians 2:15-17 discusses something that was “the substance.” To what does the word “substance” refer?
17. Of what is Isaiah 2:2-4 speaking?
18. What important point is Galatians 5:6 making (“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love”)?
19. What phrase does James 1:25 use to refer to the New Law under which we today live?
20. What, according to John 12:48, will serve as our judge on the Day of Judgment?