

## WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 19

I want to talk to you about why we have an Old Testament and a New Testament – the divisions of the Bible. When we say “Old Testament” we mean the old covenant. What was that? It was the Law given to Moses at Mount Sinai. It was given to the nation of Israel, God’s covenant people, the Jews. And though it was an important covenant, it was never meant to be permanent. As it turned out, God’s people failed to keep the conditions of the old covenant anyway. The LORD, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, says this: “Behold, days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them... out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke...” (Jeremiah 31:31-32). Through the prophet Jeremiah God said, “I’m going to make a new covenant.” That took place in the New Testament.

Paul confirms this in Second Corinthians: “But their minds (the Jews) were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains un-lifted, because it is removed in Christ” (2 Corinthians 3:14). Paul uses the analogy of the glory that shone on Moses’ face when he came down from Mount Sinai. His face glowed and the people were afraid. So, Moses put a veil over his face. The glory of the LORD began to fade from Moses’s face. But the people didn’t know it because he had a veil over his face. So, Paul is using that same analogy to talk about how the glory of the old covenant has faded away in Jesus. Only the Jews don’t recognize it. They’re still thinking that the old covenant applies even though Jesus has come and done what He needed to do to establish the new covenant. So, Paul is talking about that old covenant fading away and the Jewish people failed to realize it.

The old covenant was replaced by a new covenant through the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus claimed that He

was the very fulfillment of the Law, the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17).

## ***THE NEW TESTAMENT***

And so, this morning I want us to focus on that new covenant that Jeremiah talked about and Paul said is in place now, which we call the New Testament. It's God's covenant, not only with His people Israel, but it is for all people. It is for us Gentiles too. That's good news, isn't it? It is for everyone who believes in Jesus.

I love what the writer of Hebrews says about this new covenant. "But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant [the Law given to Moses] had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second" (Hebrews 8:6-7). The writer of Hebrews calls the new covenant "better." It's "more excellent" than the old covenant.

Let's look at the structure of the New Testament. You have the books of History which is really two parts - the Gospels and the book of Acts. Then you have all those letters which dominate the New Testament. Then you have the one book of prophecy, Revelation.

*[Question 1]* The New Testament is made up of **27** books and they are divided into these four parts: The **Gospels**, the **Acts** of the **Apostles**, the **Epistles** (letters) and the **Revelation**.

*[Question 2]* The central message of the New Testament is that salvation comes through what? in what? You have three verses that give you the answer.

Jesus: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Peter: “And there is salvation in no one else [speaking of Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Paul: “... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

So, the answer is that salvation comes through believing in or having **faith** in **Jesus**. This isn't a superficial “I think” belief. No, we place our complete hope and trust in Jesus alone to save us, to give us eternal life. To use a modern term, we are “ALL IN” on Jesus. This trust in Christ is fundamental to our faith.

Baptists believe that the only way to be saved is by faith in Jesus Christ. The Baptist Faith and Message under the heading of “Salvation” says this: “Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.” So that's what we Baptists believe and it is the central message of the New Testament.

It's time to test your knowledge of the New Testament and its various authors.

*[Question 3]* Who wrote Acts? **I** – Doctor Luke. He was apparently a medical doctor. Who wrote Galatians? **B** – Paul. Who wrote 1 Timothy? **B** – Paul. Timothy was the recipient of the letter. Who wrote Hebrews? We don't know. It is **A** – unknown author. I will tell you what people think. A lot of theologians think Barnabas may have written Hebrews. Others mentioned as possible writers of Hebrews include Paul, Silas, Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla. Whoever wrote Hebrews had a good knowledge of the Old Testament and of the Jewish faith. Who wrote Mark? **H** – John

Mark. He was not a disciple. He was a convert of Paul's, probably during his first missionary journey. He had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. Most people think that Mark wrote his gospel based on Peter's account. Who wrote Romans? **B** - Paul. Who wrote James? James wrote James. He was Jesus's half-brother, **F** - Jesus' half-brother. Who wrote Revelation? **E** - John, the Apostle John. Who wrote 2 Corinthians? **B** - Paul. Who wrote Jude? **F** - Jesus' half-brother Jude. Both James and Jude were half-brothers of Jesus (same mother but different father). They are mentioned by name in Mark 6:3. They became devout followers of Jesus after His resurrection.

Notice Paul's name was mentioned several times as a writer. The last part of this question asks how many New Testament epistles is Paul credited with writing? **13** (of the 20 letters).

As an aside, the New Testament is not in chronological order. The four Gospels up front which tell the life of Jesus and is fundamental to understanding the whole story. The first New Testament books written were James and Galatians (49-50 A.D.). That is about 16 years after Pentecost, after Jesus returned to Heaven. So, the early church did not have any New Testament books. All they had was the Old Testament. Mark was the first Gospel written (50-60 A.D.) Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Corinthians and Romans were written next (51-58 A.D.). Then came Matthew, Luke and Acts (58-63 A.D.). Then came the rest of the New Testament letters. All of the Apostle John's writings - the Gospel of John, 1, 2 and 3 John and Revelation were written anywhere from 85 to 95 A.D. They are much later than all the other New Testament books.

*[Question 4]* This question is easy. The four Gospels are the history books describing whose ministry? **Jesus's** ministry. Where are Paul's and Peter's ministries described? In the book of Acts.

The Apostle John makes this statement: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book” (John 20:30). And then in Chapter 21 he says, “Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

*[Question 5]* True or False? The Gospels recorded everything that Jesus did. **False.** According to John, there were a whole lot more.

This is John’s purpose statement for writing the Gospel of John: “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

True or False? The Gospels were written so that we would believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and have life. **True.** John states this explicitly, but the other writers had the same mission and purpose as John. They were writing to a different audience, but they had the same purpose.

The Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

True or False? Jesus instructed us to teach others to follow His commands. **True.** That means that we need to know His commands before we can start teaching them.

True or False? All four Gospel writers were one of Jesus’ original 12 disciples. **False.** We know Mark was not and we know Luke was not. Matthew and John were.

This is Luke's introduction to the book of Acts: "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1).

Luke writes to Theophilus, a Gentile convert to Christianity. Luke tells him that in the first book he wrote (the Gospel of Luke) he had written about Jesus' life and teachings. So, Luke and Acts are connected by the same author. The book of Acts is the follow-up account of Jesus' life and power now working through the apostles.

*[Question 6]* The Book of Acts is an historical account of the acts of **the Holy Spirit** working through the **apostles**. They would not have done anything without the Holy Spirit. It is the continuing account of the life and power of **Jesus** now at work in those who believe in Him.

*[Question 7]* The Epistles are **letters** written to instruct the church on how to live the Christian life. They show believers that being a part of the body of Christ comes with both **privileges** as well as **responsibilities**.

Let me give you an example of how an Epistle works.

Paul is instructing the believers at Colossae: "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:6-8).

So, in this passage here Paul is instructing, guiding and warning the Colossian believers. That is what the Epistles do. The various New Testament letters have particular people in mind who have specific issues that need to be addressed. It is good when you study these letters to know what the issues are. They

have been passed down through the ages and preserved for us so that we can apply them to our situations.

The introduction to the book of Revelation: “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw” (Revelation 1:1-2).

*[Question 8]* The Book of Revelation is the revelation of **Jesus** to the **Apostle John** to show us what is to come.

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3).

*[Question 9]* Revelation has a promise attached to it. That promise is to everyone who ----- **Reads, Hears** and **Keeps** its words.

“Jesus said to them [His disciples] again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you’” (John 20:21).

*[Question 10]* Consider the authority given to the New Testament writers. Based on the above verse, whose authority did the disciples receive? **Jesus’s** authority. You are going to notice a pattern here on these answers.

Acts Chapter 26 is a long passage is Paul’s account of his conversion experience on the road to Damascus which is covered earlier in Acts. Here Paul is talking to King Agrippa and he’s telling him what happened on the road to Damascus: “And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in

which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles--to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me'" (Acts 26:15-18).

Whose authority did Paul receive? **Jesus's** authority.

In Acts Chapter 4 Peter and John had gone outside the temple and healed a man who was lame. They had been brought back into the temple to answer questions about why they were preaching in the name of Jesus. They are standing in front of the Sanhedrin and Peter makes this bold declaration under the influence of the Holy Spirit: "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by Him this man is standing before you well" (Acts 4:10).

By what authority did Peter heal the lame man? **Jesus's** authority.

The opening of the book of Hebrews: "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son [Jesus], whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).

By whom did the writer of Hebrews speak? **God's Son** (Jesus).

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16)

Whose power does Peter make known? **Jesus's** power.

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place. He made it



known by sending His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw" (Revelation 1:1-2).

By what authority did John write the Book of Revelation? **Jesus's** authority. Jesus Himself gives the revelation.

The last one: "... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Who is the cornerstone of the apostles? **Jesus.**

Over and over the New Testament writers claim their authority came from Jesus.

Paul tells the Corinthian believers: "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

Go ahead and do *[Question 11]* on your own. It's fairly easy.

*[Question 12]* Why were the apostles so confident that they wrote correctly about Jesus Christ? Was it because of time spent with Jesus. They HAD spent time with Jesus, hadn't they? Was that why they felt so confident? No. Was it because they studied His teachings thoroughly? I'm sure they had. I'm sure they had discussion groups where they talked about Jesus's teachings. But that wasn't the reason. Was it because of their formal theological training? As far as we know they didn't have any. The answer is this: **Because God had given them understanding.**