

“If That First Covenant ...”

“... had been faultless then would no place have been sought for a second” (Heb. 8:7). The writer has been leading up to this conclusion: there was fault with the first covenant, else it would not have been removed. He had written, *“Jesus became the surety of a better covenant”* (Heb. 7:22); and he hath *“obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises”* (Heb. 8:6). Twice in these verses the writer calls the covenant, of which Jesus is mediator, better. Since two covenants are being compared and the second is better than the first, he therein implies that the first covenant was not without fault.

Some object to this conclusion. Because the word *“covenant”* in vs. 7 is a supplied word and vs. 8 reads, *“for finding fault with them, he saith, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;”* they insist that the fault was not with the covenant God made, but with the people with whom it was made. Still, despite the fact that the word *“covenant”* in vs. 7 is a supplied word and vs. 8 indicates God did find fault with the people, this does not remove the obvious conclusion the writer had earlier made and will further reach in this section. In both chapters 7:22 and 8:6 the word *“covenant”* is in the original language and the word *“better,”* found in both verses, describes the covenant made by Christ, necessarily implying two covenants were considered and that the second was better than the first. The conclusion which the inspired writer made, must stand. And while, admittedly, the word *“covenant”* in vs. 7 is a supplied word, its addition to the English verse supplies an accurate and current thought: it was of a covenant the writer did speak.

Yet some object that David claimed perfection for God’s law and that if there was fault with that covenant it would not have been perfect. Truly David wrote, *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”* (Ps. 19:7). The Old Covenant did perfectly what it was designed to do. The fault with the Old Covenant lay not with imperfections within itself; the fault lay with what that covenant could not do: all highlighting the worth of the ministry and mediatorship of Christ.

Hebrews 9:15 sets forth the better quality of the second covenant. He wrote, *“and for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”* The implication of the verse is clear. Without Jesus’ sac-

rifice made, the blood of the better covenant, those who were part of the first covenant could not have had their transgression forgiven nor could they have receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Those under the first covenant broke God's covenant and God found fault with them. Those under the second covenant also break that covenant and God finds fault with us. The inherent fault of the first covenant lay in the fact that when men broke it, nothing could be done to permanently remedy that fault whereas under the new covenant which when man break, there is remedial power to permanently correct the fault God finds with those who break it. It is of this inherent weakness of that first covenant of which Paul spoke. *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid ... for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law"* (Gal. 3:21).

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