

## **“He Hath Made The First Old ...”**

*“In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. but that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away ...”* (Heb. 8:13).

These are the final words on this subject of the New Covenant promised by Jeremiah in this section. Although the writer will have occasion to mention it further in the epistle, he now will turn to another subject. The Hebrew writer comments that the first covenant waxeth aged and was nigh unto vanishing away. When were these words applicable: at the time of the writing of the Hebrew epistle or earlier when Jeremiah uttered them? This latter is true. When Jeremiah uttered these words 600 years before Christ, promising a new covenant, it was then the first covenant was made old and from thence was nigh to disappearing. It would be almost six and one half centuries before this would transpire, but with God, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. True, remnants of that covenant remained when the epistle was written: the temple and Jerusalem still stood; the priesthood and sacrifices still remained, but, for all practical purposes, the first covenant had vanished away.

It had vanished away because a new covenant had already been given and the new could not be given until the first was removed. In Hebrews 10 these words are found: *“He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second”* (Heb. 10:9f). The two laws could not exist simultaneously. Paul told the Romans, *“Wherefore brethren, ye are made dead to the law, through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to another ...”* (Rom. 7:4). The Galatians were told, *“So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come we are no longer under a tutor”* (Gal. 3:24f). The law was a tutor, a schoolmaster. When the faith of Christ came, the schoolmaster, the tutor, the law, was done away.

The Ephesians were told, *“He is our peace who hath made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of the two, one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God, through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby”* (Eph. 2:14-16). Look at the tense of these words: *“broke down;” “abolished;” “having slain;”* words signifying action already completed. The law was a partition between Jew and Gentile and Christ tore it down at the cross. The first covenant had already vanished away when the Hebrew writer wrote.

Consider Colossians 2:14: "*Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, that was contrary to us, and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.*" Once more, look at the past tense of these words: "*blotted out;*" "*taken away.*" These words speak of completed action: the bond which was against us, the law, was blotted out, taken away, nailed to the cross.

To a church leaving the gospel they had embraced for a different gospel which could not avail, Paul gave an allegory of Abraham's two wives and two sons. The women stood for two covenants: Hagar for the first given at Sinai; Sarah for the new covenant (Gal. 4:21-21). The two sons stood for those who were in the covenant God had made: Ishmael stood for fleshly Israel; Isaac stood for spiritual Israel. Paul quoted the words of Sarah regarding Hagar: "*Cast out the hand maid and her son.*" Paul's application is plain. Cast out the law. We are under it no more. The first covenant vanished away when Jesus died on the cross and those who seek to be justified by it are, in Paul's words, fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4)!

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