

# END-TIMES ISSUES

**AND BEYONDI**

Covenants – Israel's mostly-bad examples.

**#17**

1

## COVENANTS involve...

- ➡ **Truthfulness and trust.**
  - ✓ Promises and agreements are made.
  - ✓ The breaking of a covenant is a *betrayal* of trust. It's a serious matter, and God warns us against doing it.
- ➡ **Values and choices.\***
  - ✓ They influence conduct and perspectives on issues.
  - ✓ A morally-bad covenant can have *horrible* consequences.

The Old Testament gives us many examples of failures in *both* of these matters.

\* (This includes: ① covenants we *choose* to make, as well as, ② covenants we *respond* to, when they are made and we have no choice in the matter.)

2

**Since** the Old Testament was written to *teach and warn* us, ...

Now these things occurred as **examples** ...

These things happened to them as **examples** and were written down as **warnings** for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

1 Corinthians 10:6a, 11 (NIV)

**We had better learn**, and take to heart the consequences of the actions these people took (whether good or evil).

- ✓ God requires us to follow his example (and any *good* examples found in the Old Testament), and to NOT follow the *bad* examples.

3

**Since** God also judges *nations* ...

"I will take vengeance in anger and wrath on the **nations** that have not obeyed me."

Micah 5:15 (NIV)

With integrity he judges and wages war. ...

A sharp sword comes out of his mouth to defeat the **nations**. He will rule them with an iron scepter and tread the winepress of the fierce anger of God Almighty.

Revelation 19:11b, 15 (GW)

**Nations had better learn**, and take to heart the consequences of their actions.

- ✓ Yet we, as *individuals*, can learn, whether or not *nations* do. At the *final* judgment, we will not be held accountable for other people's rejection of God's warnings.

4

### About the Old Testament examples:

- ✓ **Our focus is on people-people covenants, in which at least one of the parties is a group.**
  - Sometimes, a covenant may be made by *representatives* of a group. The end result will affect the entire group.
- ✓ **Sin related to covenants are *not* the only sins that were present.**
  - Wicked people don't limit themselves to just *one* type of sin!
  - Breaking covenants was often associated with the *final* stages of a nation's judgment by God
  - This final judgment by God could occur in a variety of ways. (He normally used *other* nations to accomplish it, but he could also use *natural disasters* – as demonstrated by some of the judgments against the *Canaanites*.)
  - Often, the wicked *don't* recognize it as a judgment by *God*, because they have already *suppressed* what God has revealed to them (Romans 1:18-23).

5

### A warning to nations that have been exposed to God's Word.

- ✓ Many of the examples involve a nation that has been exposed to the truth... and then rejected it.
  - God may use a *more-wicked* nation to judge them, and later destroy that *more-wicked* nation. *EXAMPLE* in the book of *Habakkuk*:

**Habakkuk**

**1:1-4 – Habakkuk's complaint...** "Look at all the wickedness in Judah! Aren't you going to do something about it, God?"

**1:5-11 – God's answer...** "I'm going to send the wicked Babylonians (Chaldeans) to punish Judah."

**1:12-2:1 – Habakkuk's response (complaint #2)...** "How can you do that? They are even more wicked than Judah!"

**The rest of chapter 2 – God's response (#2)...** "The Babylonians will get their punishment later."

**Chapter 3 – Habakkuk's expression of trust** (in prayer and praise).

6

### A more severe judgment? This should not surprise us.

- ✓ It's a *basic principle* that those who have been exposed to *more truth* will be judged *more severely*, if they reject it.

Brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers. You know that we who teach will be **judged more severely**.

James 3:1 (GW)

From everyone who has been given much, **much will be required**; and from him who has been entrusted with much, even **more will be demanded**.

Luke 12:48b (BSB)

If I [= Jesus] had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but **now they have no excuse for their sin**.

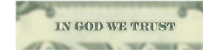
John 15:22 (NIV)

THOSE WHO HEARD JESUS

7

- ✓ Perhaps we should take this to heart, considering how much exposure *our nation* has had to God's Word... and how much *our nation* has rejected it.

- Especially since *our nation* used to call itself a "Christian" nation. (This *never* meant that everyone was saved... just that the Bible used to have a strong influence on the nation.)



I pledge allegiance...  
one Nation *under God*...



- ✦ This would be true of *any nation* that has had a significant exposure to God's Word in the past... and has turned against it.

8

### Today's examples.

We can be glad that *not all* of the covenants made by groups of people were evil!

- ✓ Some were for protection against enemies.
  - Abraham had an covenant (alliance) with some Amorites – Genesis 14:13. (This was before the Amorites reached their ultimate wickedness – see Genesis 15:16.)
- ✓ Some were for maintaining peace.
  - Covenants (treaties) between Abimelech (king of Gerar) and Abraham/Isaac – Genesis 21:22-34 and Genesis 26:26-32.
- ✓ Some were expressions of loyalty to a king.
  - Northern Israel made a covenant (compact) with King David – 1 Chronicles 11:3. (They accepted him as their king.)
  - Various covenants were made for installing the rightful king Joash, and for deposing the usurper Athaliah - 2 Kings 11:4, 17; 2 Chronicles 23:1, 3.

9

Unfortunately, most of Israel's history is characterized by sinful covenants and sinful responses.

- ✓ God warned them to NOT make covenants with the Canaanites.
  - The Canaanites had become wicked beyond recovery. Their influence would turn the Israelites away from the true God.

Do not make a **covenant** with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you, and you will eat their sacrifices.

And when you take some of their daughters as brides for your sons, their daughters will prostitute themselves to their gods and cause your sons to do the same.

Exodus 34:15-16 (BSB)

(See also Exodus 23:32 and Deuteronomy 7:2.)

10

- ✓ One of the Canaanite cities (Gibeon) tricked Israel into making a covenant with them.
  - They sent a delegation with worn-out clothes and moldy bread. The Israelites looked at the clothes and bread... but *did not inquire of the Lord*. (This failure was sin.)

They went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land; please make a **treaty** [= covenant] with us." ...

Then the men of Israel sampled their provisions, but did not seek the counsel of the LORD. And Joshua made a **treaty** of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them.

Three days after they had made the **treaty** with the Gibeonites, the Israelites learned that they were neighbors, living among them.

Joshua 9:6, 14-16 (BSB)

(The whole event is described in Joshua 9.)

11

- Individual citizens of a nation might not like it... but when the *leaders* make a covenant (treaty) – whether good or bad – it effects *everyone* in the nation.

But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel.

And **the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders**. All the leaders answered, "**We have sworn an oath to them by the LORD, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them.**"

Joshua 9:18-19 (BSB)

- Years later, King Saul violated this covenant and killed some Gibeonites. It resulted in God's judgment – a famine. Members of Saul's family had to die, in order for the famine to come to an end. See 2 Samuel 21:1-14.

12

✓ **As the Jewish nation got further away from God, they began to willfully make covenants with the wicked Canaanites.**

- This brought judgment from God... and a failure to completely take over the land.
- Remorse (tears) could not undo the consequences of their sin.

Now the angel of the LORD ... said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I had promised to your fathers, and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and you are not to make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall tear down their altars.'

**Yet you have not obeyed My voice.** What is this you have done? So now I tell you that **I will not drive out these people before you;** they will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you."

When the angel of the LORD had spoken these words to all the Israelites, the people lifted up their voices and wept.

Judges 2:1-4 (BSB)

13

✓ **Later, they wanted a king to rule them, instead of God.**

- They wanted to be *like the nations* around them; and it was a rejection of God.

"Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have."

Samuel was displeased with their request and went to the LORD for guidance.

"Do everything they say to you," the LORD replied, "for **they are rejecting me, not you.** They don't want me to be their king any longer. Ever since I brought them from Egypt **they have continually abandoned me and followed other gods.** And now they are giving you the same treatment. Do as they ask, but solemnly warn them about the way a king will reign over them."

1 Samuel 8:5b-9 (NLT)

- Occasionally, they would have a *good* king. But the over-all trend was downward – for both the king and the people. In the end, God destroyed the nation, and the people were sent into exile.

14

- Under the kings, there would be many covenants (treaties, pacts, agreements, alliances, etc.) with many nations. We are told about only a few.
- But those we are told about are written down *for our good* – as *examples and warnings* that we can learn from.

Now these things occurred as **examples** ...

These things happened to them as **examples** and were written down as **warnings** for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

1 Corinthians 10:6a, 11 (NIV)

- (The nature of the treaties and the circumstances surrounding them would determine whether they were good or evil.)

15

✓ **Covenants before the nation split into two...**

- ❖ **Saul** – We already noted what happened when he *broke* the covenant that had been made with the Gibeonites.
- ❖ **Solomon** made a covenant of peace with Hiram, king of Tyre.

There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a **treaty** [= covenant].

1 Kings 5:12b (NIV)

- Later, Tyre would break a "treaty of brotherhood" – and God would destroy Tyre. This is thought to have been the treaty between Hiram and Solomon; but the text does not say.

"Because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a **treaty** [= covenant] of brotherhood, I will send fire on the walls of Tyre that will consume her fortresses."

Amos 1:9b-10 (NIV)

(Alexander the Great would accomplish this.)

16

✓ **The downward trend of the northern kingdom.**

- ❖ **Baasha** had a treaty with Ben-Hadad\*, an Aramean king, who would later break it. (More about this at: *Asa, king of Judah.*)
- ❖ **Ahab** – After defeating the Arameans, Ahab made a treaty with Ben-Hadad,\* in disobedience to God.

"On the basis of a **treaty** [= covenant] I will set you free." So he made a **treaty** with him, and let him go.

1 Kings 20:34b (NIV)

- Because of this, *Ahab* would die instead, and Israel would suffer loss. (This happened 3 years later – see 1 Kings 22.)

[The prophet] said to the king, "This is what the Lord says: 'You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore **it is your life for his life, your people for his people.**'"

1 Kings 20:42 (NIV)

\* (This was probably father and son, both having the name "Ben-Hadad.")

17

❖ **Hoshea, the last king of Israel** – breaking a treaty.

- The northern kingdom had become a vassal of Assyria and had to regularly pay tribute to them. This would have involved making a *treaty* (agreement) with them.

**"YOU pay us tribute... and WE will not destroy you."**

- Hoshea became a *traitor*, and chose to rely on Egypt. This would have meant *breaking* their treaty (covenant) with Assyria and making one with Egypt.
- When describing their coming judgment, the prophet Hosea [note the difference in spelling] says this:

They spout empty words and make **covenants** they don't intend to keep.

Hosea 10:4a (NLT)

- The end result... →

18

- The result of this covenant-breaking? The Assyrians destroyed the kingdom and deported the people. 2 Kings 17:1-6 describes what happened. *However, 2 Kings 17:7-23 tells us the ultimate reason why all this happened.* Here is part of the reason:

All this happened because **the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, ...**

... **the LORD warned Israel and Judah**, saying, "Turn from your wicked ways and keep My commandments and statutes, ..." But **they would not listen**, and they stiffened their necks like their fathers, who did not believe the LORD their God.

**They rejected His statutes and the covenant** He had made with their fathers, as well as the decrees He had given them. They pursued worthless idols and themselves became worthless, going after the surrounding nations that the LORD had commanded them not to imitate.

2 Kings 17:7a, 13b, 14-15 (BSB)

19

### ✓ The downward trend of the southern kingdom (Judah).

- ❖ **Asa** – King Baasha (Northern Israel) had a treaty with Ben-Hadad (Aram), and went to war against Asa (Judah). So Asa decided to *make* a treaty with Ben-Hadad ... one that required Ben-Hadad to *break* his treaty with the northern kingdom.

"Let there be a **treaty** between you and me... See, I am sending you silver and gold. **Break your treaty** with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."

2 Chronicles 16:3 (NLT)

- Asa thought it was politically expedient (since he was at war with the northern kingdom)... but actually, it was sin.

"Because **you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God**, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. ... **You have done a foolish thing**, and from now on you will be at war."

2 Chronicles 16:7b, 9b (NIV); see all of v. 7-9

20

- ❖ **Hezekiah** – A previous king apparently made a treaty with Assyria. This was probably Ahaz, who paid the king of Assyria to help him fight Northern Israel and the Arameans (2 Kings 16:7).
- Hezekiah (Ahaz's son) rebelled against the king of Assyria (2 Kings 18:7). A few years later, Assyria attacked Judah, and Hezekiah agreed to pay him tribute (2 Kings 18:13-16).
- Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, took the tribute, then immediately broke the treaty and sent his army to besiege Jerusalem. This is what Isaiah said about the treaty:

The **treaty** is broken,  
its witnesses are despised,  
no one is respected.

Isaiah 33:8b (NIV)

- ★ **To make matters worse, Sennacherib mocked the God of Israel.**

- The end result... →

21

- Result #1: *It's not good to make the Lord, the God of Israel, your enemy!* God's reply? It's in 2 Kings 19. But part of it is:

"'Because your rage and arrogance against Me have reached My ears, I will put My hook in your nose and My bit in your mouth;  
**I will send you back the way you came.'**

**'I will defend this city and save it** for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David.'"

2 Kings 19:28, 34 (BSB)

- Result #2: God destroyed Sennacherib's army (185,000 soldiers); Sennacherib went home (humiliated) and was later assassinated.

And that very night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 men in the camp of the Assyrians. ...

So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew.

2 Kings 19:35a, 36a (BSB)

22

- ❖ **Zedekiah, the last king of Judah** – He did basically the same thing the last king of Northern Israel did. He made a treaty – in this case, with Babylon – then broke it and relied on Egypt.

- Having conquered Jerusalem, the king of Babylon put Zedekiah on the throne, and made a covenant/treaty with him (Ezekiel 17:11-14). *Under these terms, the nation could continue to exist.*
- Zedekiah rebelled, broke the covenant, and looked to Egypt for help (Ezekiel 17:15-17).
- Result? Babylon attacked and destroyed Jerusalem, and took the king and the people back to Babylon. *Being unfaithful to the covenant was basically the same as being unfaithful to God!*

I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because **he was unfaithful to me.**

All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken.

Ezekiel 17:20-21 (NIV)

23

- ❖ **The people also broke covenants.** (It wasn't just the king.)

- BACKGROUND: Under certain situations, Jews could become slaves of other Jews... *but only for a maximum of 7 years.* However, the people had forced them to be *permanent* slaves.
- During the war against Babylon, King Zedekiah had made a covenant with the people to free their slaves – *in accordance with God's commands in the Law.* Yet a short time later, the people *broke* their covenant, and re-enslaved the people. (See Jeremiah 34:8-22.) *In doing this, they also broke God's command.*
- They broke their "proclamation of freedom" to their slaves; so God gave them a "proclamation of freedom": freedom to be destroyed.

Therefore this is what the LORD says: You have not obeyed Me; **you have not proclaimed freedom**, each man for his brother and for his neighbor. **So now I proclaim freedom for you**, declares the LORD—freedom to fall by sword, by plague, and by famine! I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

Jeremiah 34:17 (BSB)

24

**Nations making a covenant *against* God and his people.**

✓ **Psalm 83... This resembles the situation that's occurring today!**

- The nations surrounding Israel have conspired to destroy Israel... but it is actually against *God*.

"Come," they say, "let us destroy them as a nation, so that Israel's name is remembered no more."  
 With one mind they plot together; they form an **alliance** [= covenant] against you [= God] ...  
 Psalm 83:4-5 (NIV)

- In the end, *they* will be destroyed, and *God* will be exalted.

May they ever be ashamed and dismayed; may they **perish in disgrace**.  
 Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord—that **you alone are the Most High over all the earth**.  
 Psalm 83:17-18 (NIV)

25

**A future covenant made with Israel, that appears to be broken at the half-way point.**

✓ **This appears to be a *betrayal*.**

"He will confirm a **covenant** with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."  
 Daniel 9:27 (NIV)

- Jesus refers to this passage, during his "end-times" discussion, in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14.
- Many believe this is a reference to the actions of the "antichrist" at the end of the age. But there may also be parallels to events that have already happened. (At this point, it is not our purpose to examine this issue.)

26

**What can we conclude?**

**Does this leave us with a **MISSION**?**

(The answer: YES.)

⇒ **CONSIDER** the nature of covenants, and their seriousness.

⇒ **THINK ABOUT** (and apply) these principles...

① To YOU; and ② To NATIONS (or groups of people).

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

✓ **In what ways do these examples of covenants reflect...**

- Truthfulness and trust... or betrayal?
- Values and choices... whether good or bad?

✓ **What do they teach us about...**

- The covenants, promises, agreements (etc.) that **WE** make?
- The covenants, treaties, alliances (etc.) that **NATIONS** make?

27

**FINALLY...**

⇒ **PURSU**E a God-honoring focus!

- We could summarize Old Testament history as a "mess" of mostly bad covenants and covenant-breaking – ***the total opposite of what God requires from us.***
- In their examples, we discovered that sinful covenants and sinful responses aren't only against ***people***... they are against ***God***.
- Make it your goal to *learn from what they did... and do the opposite!***

Now these things occurred as **examples** ...  
 These things happened to them as **examples** and were written down as **warnings** for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.  
 1 Corinthians 10:6a, 11 (NIV)

28

## Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NLT" – Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "NIV" – Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com )
- Scriptures marked "GW" – Scripture is taken from GODS WORD®, Copyright 1995 God's Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "BSB" – Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB; Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). <https://bereanbible.com/>

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall – GDJ / CC0; via [openclipart.org](https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture); <https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture>
- Globe with lit fuse – GDJ / CC0; via [openclipart.org](https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb); <https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb>
- Currency – all: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons; <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2005-Penny-Uncirculated-Obverse-cropped.png>; [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:S\\_Half\\_Dollar\\_Obverse\\_e\\_2016.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:S_Half_Dollar_Obverse_e_2016.jpg); [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US\\_one\\_dollar\\_bill\\_reverse\\_series\\_2009.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_one_dollar_bill_reverse_series_2009.jpg)
- Pledge of allegiance – [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pledge-of-Allegiance-to-the-Flag-by-Irving\\_Caesar.pdf](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pledge-of-Allegiance-to-the-Flag-by-Irving_Caesar.pdf)

Presentation – Dennis Hinks © 2024.

29