

Covenant Keepers – meaning business with God

Nehemiah 9:38 HCSB In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement in writing on a sealed document *containing the names of our leaders, Levites, and priests.*

God is in the habit of making and keeping covenants forever. For instance:

- He made a vow to never again destroy mankind with a flood.¹
- He gave the land of Canaan to His people as part of a covenant with our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.²
- He made a covenant to always provide for His ministers out of the givings of His people.³
- He made a vow to establish David's house (which means his family or lineage) forever on the throne, and He kept that vow in the only way possible; by placing the sinless Son of God who, by adoption, was David's descendent, on the throne of the universe.⁴

In fact, the whole point of circumcision was to teach us that identifying ourselves with Him was an irrevocable thing.

- **Genesis 17:13 HCSB** a slave born in your house, as well as one purchased with money, must be circumcised. My covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant.

It's important that we understand this aspect of God. When we break our covenants with Him bad stuff happens, as we see in this eschatological passage.

- **Isaiah 24:1-6 HCSB** Look, the LORD is stripping the earth bare and making it desolate. He will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants: (2) people and priest alike, servant and master, female servant and mistress, buyer and seller, lender and borrower, creditor and debtor. (3) The earth will be stripped completely bare and will be totally plundered, for the LORD has spoken this message. (4) The earth mourns and withers; the world wastes away and withers; the exalted people of the earth waste away. (5) The earth is polluted by its inhabitants, for they have transgressed teachings, overstepped decrees, and broken the everlasting covenant. (6) Therefore a curse has consumed the earth, and its inhabitants have become guilty; the earth's inhabitants have been burned, and only a few survive.
- **Isaiah 24:18 HCSB** Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit, and whoever escapes from the pit will be caught in a snare. For the windows are opened from above, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Did you note that part of the curse included twisting the surface of the earth, terrible sounds, deep pits, windows opening from above, and the foundations of the earth being shaken? Consider the following graph while meditating on that.

¹ Genesis 9:16

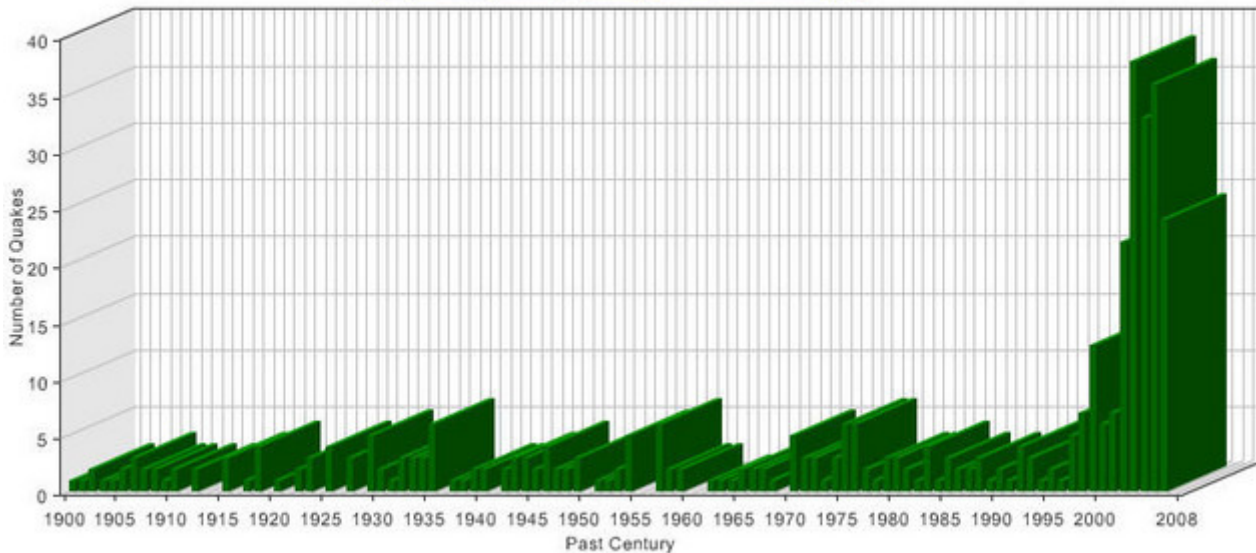
² 1 Chronicles 16:15-18; Psalm 105:7-11

³ Leviticus 24:8; Numbers 18:19

⁴ 2 Samuel 23:5

USGS Worldwide Deadly & Destructive Earthquakes between Magnitudes 6 and 8

<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/world/historical.php>



This USGS chart tracks all earthquakes greater than 6.0 since 1900. Interesting, isn't it? Notice carefully the huge explosion in the number of earthquakes after the year 2000. This is not due to having better seismographs each year, since they have been using essentially the same seismographs since the 1980's. One of my "favorite" pathetic explanations that people give to explain away this incredible phenomenon has to be that it is because the instruments were improved 30 years ago; that somehow that has made the number of earthquakes go up almost every year since then! No – we have to face the scientific fact that we now have three times as many earthquakes as there were thirty years ago.

We have to take a look at God's promise that those who pollute the earth, pursue injustice, and break His covenants will suffer earthquakes. Take a second considering look at the data and draw some conclusions.

Let's go back to our principle study shall we? So far we have seen that God is in the habit of making and keeping covenants forever. He has repeatedly made and kept covenants with individuals and nations. The blessings that come with His covenants are phenomenal and the ones that depend totally on Him are irrevocable. We have also seen that, in the covenants in which some small part depends on us and we fail, terrible consequences can come about. Keep these things in mind while reading the following passage. Turn if you would to:

- **Isaiah 55:1-3 HCSB** "Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters; and you without money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost! (2) Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods. (3) Pay attention and come to Me; listen, so that you will live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the promises assured to David.

My mind arrives to at least the following four conclusions:

1. How deeply we need the blessings of God!
2. How perfectly suited to our needs are His commands!
3. How freely and generously are they offered!
4. How terrible are the consequences of neglecting them!

Why indeed would we turn to anyone else? Why would we take on the burden of association with a sin-sick world? We need to make and keep a covenant with God, but I want you to note what promises this passage in Isaiah refers to in verse 3. What God offers are the promises assured to David. What promises were those?

- **2 Samuel 23:5 HCSB** Is it not true my (*David's*) house is with God? For He has established an everlasting covenant with me, ordered and secured in every *detail*. Will He not bring about my whole salvation and *my* every desire?
- **Acts 13:22-23 HCSB** After removing him, He raised up David as their king, of whom He testified: '**I have found David** the son of Jesse, **a man after My heart**, who will carry out all My will.' (23) "From this man's descendants, according to the promise, God brought the Savior, Jesus, to Israel.

The promise is of a descendant of David who would bring salvation and sit on the throne forever. The promise is of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the only begotten Son of God – Jesus.

If you have not done so yet, I urge you to reach out to the Father in prayer and make a covenant with Him. Give Him your soul. Give Him your hope for the future. Give Him control over your life. Set aside your thoughts and your ways and take His perfect law of freedom as your rule. In return, He will give you His Son to save you and His Holy Spirit to guide and keep you.

Our main conclusion so far has been that Yahweh is a great covenant maker and keeper! The problem that our people have always had is that we are faithless covenant breakers. We lie, cheat, commit adultery, or wrongly divorce our spouses. We make promises to God and don't keep them. We are sinners through and through.

Why do we do this? Why do we keep breaking our promises and cheating on each other and on God? I submit that pride is at the heart of the problem. We think that we deserve those pleasures. We think that we are worth more than what we are receiving.

What is the solution? At the very root of all good character, virtue, or integrity lays humility. We must consider God to be wiser than we are. We must consider His instructions to be superior to our ways of thinking. We must consider others as being more important than ourselves. In short, as Paul explained, we must not think more highly of ourselves than we should but instead think sensibly.⁵

This is why it is critical that we not spoil our children. Doting on our children makes them think that they are the center of the universe and it makes it that much harder to keep faith with God.

This is why it is critical that we discipline ourselves. We must constantly guard against complacency, against laziness, against selfishness, against all the things that might lead us to break our covenants with our God.

Allow me to suggest some methods to develop humility toward others and toward God, thereby becoming a better covenant keeper. Obviously, I am not going to pretend to be the source of all truth and wisdom on the issue of humility! I will be drawing these points (in rough order) from the passages you see listed in your notes.⁶

1. **Don't practice false humility.** Humility is not self-hatred or having a "poor me" attitude. Get your self-worth and self-evaluation from the only completely credible source – the Bible. Be honest about your gifts and talents but be willing to either set their rewards aside or to submit them to the benefit of others. An honest evaluation of the resources available to a relationship is critical to being able to do any good. Humility helps us to identify our own self worth, to accept who we really are without having to constantly prove ourselves to those with whom we wish to relate. Understanding and acknowledging our personal strengths and weaknesses, as well

⁵ Romans 12:3

⁶ 1 Kings 8:56-60; Psalm 25:1-15; Luke 22:25-27; Colossians 1:17-19; James 4:6-17; 2 Chronicles 34:27; 1 Peter 5:5; Romans 12:3; Philippians 2:5-8; Genesis 18:7; James 1:2-4

as those of the other people with who we want to communicate, is a step toward healthy relationships and healing of troubled situations.

2. **Admit your continuous need of God's supply and protection.** Acknowledge what Yahweh has done for you in the past and place your hope in His continued provision.
3. **Confess your yetzer hara (your sin nature).** Beg for Hashem's help in "inclining your heart" in the right direction. Go through your life and acknowledge even youthful sins. Then don't bring them up again for that would reveal doubt in the Lord's ability or willingness to forgive.
4. **Witness.** Focus all your efforts toward causing all the peoples of the earth to know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.
5. **Place your hope in God rather than in man.**
6. **Wait for God's impeccable timing.** Don't force issues.
7. **Make a constant attempt to understand Adonai's ways.** Ask for guidance of the Ruach' Ha Kodesh (the Holy Spirit). Ask for God's secret counsel, day to day advice on issues not specifically covered in the Scriptures. This is the Ruach' Ha Kodesh's role in our lives.
8. **Seek for and depend on Hashem's grace.** Do not demand justice for yourself but instead constantly beg for God's mercy.
9. **Depend on and remind God of His promises.**
10. **Serve others.** Allow others to serve you. Remember there is but one master at our table and it's not you.
11. **Actively submit to God.** Do your part. Resist the Devil in whatever form he may appear. Push back darkness wherever and whenever you can.
12. **Be passionate about Him.**
 - a. Let there be emotional consequences when you sin.
 - b. Do whatever you must to keep your mind constantly focused on the Lord as you go through your day to day life.
 - c. Dedicate portions of time to spend alone with your Master.
 - d. Keep your heart tender to the stirrings of the Spirit. Allow yourself to express these feelings openly. Only then will the Lord truly hear your prayers.
13. **Don't be negative.** Be discerning but don't criticize others.
14. **Don't be overly certain of your future.** Work hard to set aside for the future (i.e. go to the ant sluggard and learn) but acknowledge the frailty of your life. Don't overly plan your life. Allow room for God to work. Follow His guidance more than your PDA's.
15. **Never boast except in Who is your Lord.**
16. **Obey what you know.**
17. **Be willing to submit to the teachings of your church's elders.** Once the body has spoken on an issue, if it is not in violation to the Scriptures, cheerfully go along with the decision. To go on whining about it indicates you think you know better than the combined minds of your peers. Once a decision has been made, obey it. Don't think you are above the rules or that somehow things are different for you. Don't demand of others what you don't demand of yourself.
18. **Be grateful for what has already been done for you.** When you are asking El Shaddai for something, make sure that you acknowledge what He has already provided for you and be sure to admit that you don't actually deserve whatever grace He deigns grant you.
19. **Learn to be content.** Accept the role, place, and resources that Adonai has given you and try to develop what you have to the best of your ability for His glory.

20. **Consider every setback a wonderful opportunity to develop humility.** Suffering is a great (if somewhat heavy handed) way to build patience, contentment, and faith in our lives.
21. **Memorize Psalm 41:4 and quote it often to the Lord.**
 - **Psalms 41:4 HCSB** I said, "LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against You."

Do these things and you will advance in your spiritual walk. You will make and keep covenants, and you will rise in favor with both God and man.⁷

⁷ Luke 2:52