

## Covenant with God

### Israel remembered their Covenant with God

#### Offerings

[Joshua 8:30-31](#) “30 At that time Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings.”

*Where did Joshua build an altar?* Joshua built the altar on Mount Ebal (8:30). Ebal was a tall mountain (3083’ above sea level and 1402’ above the Jordan valley) from which you could see most of Israel’s land. Mount Ebal faced Mount Gerizim (about 500 yards apart). [Mark Hassler in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*]

Mount Gerizim stood above the city of Shechem. When Abraham first came into Canaan, he came to Shechem ([Gen 12:6](#)). The Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim. Josephus says that it was built while Alexander the Great was conquering that area (about 332 B.C.) (*Jewish Antiquities* 11.8.324).

Jesus disputed with a woman in Samaria about the location of the temple. [John 4:20](#) “20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”” **Josephus** wrote about this dispute. “Now it came to pass that the Alexandrian Jews, and those Samaritans who paid their worship to the temple that was built in the days of Alexander at Mount Gerizim, did now make a sedition one against another, and disputed about their temples before Ptolemy himself, the Jews saying that, according to the law of Moses, the temple was to be built at Jerusalem; and the Samaritans saying that it was to be built at Gerizim” (*Jewish Antiquities*, 13.3.74). The temple was destroyed before the time of the NT (probably in the 2nd century B.C.).

The source of the dispute is **very** important. The Samaritans (like the Sadducees) only recognized Moses’ writings (the Pentateuch) as Scripture. They did not accept the Prophets & Writings (Joshua-Malachi) [Brian Maier in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*].

*According to vs 31, why did Joshua build the altar at Mount Ebal?* Moses had instructed Israel to build the altar. [Deuteronomy 27:4-5](#) “4 And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on **Mount Ebal**, and you shall plaster them with plaster. 5 And there you shall build an **altar** to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them;” In [Joshua 18](#), Israel moves the Tabernacle to Shiloh. Later, David moved the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, where Solomon eventually built the Temple. The Samaritans rejected the move to Shiloh and Jerusalem. For them, Moses’ command to worship in Shechem was the only legitimate command [because only the Pentateuch was Scripture].

*What did they offer on the altar?* They offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. [Deuteronomy 27:6-7](#) “6 you shall build an altar to the Lord your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer **burnt offerings** on it to the Lord your God, 7 and you shall sacrifice **peace offerings** and shall eat there, and you shall **rejoice** before the Lord your God.”

### The Law

[Joshua 8:32-35](#) “32 And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. 33 And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. 34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”

*What did Joshua write on stones?* He wrote a copy of the law of Moses.

[Deuteronomy 27:8](#) “8 And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly.” *Why would copying and reading Scripture be an important step for Israel?* Scripture was their authority.

*What is the difference between general and special (particular) revelation?* There is an important distinction between **general and particular revelation**. General revelation includes creation ([Rom 1:19-20](#)) and an inner knowledge of God ([Rom](#)

[2:15](#)). General revelation condemns all people because God has revealed Himself to all people ([Rom 1:19-20](#)). Salvation only comes through special revelation. Special revelation includes God speaking through visions, prophets, and Scripture. God appointed apostles and prophets for the purpose of writing Scripture. Today, Scripture is complete ([Heb 1:1-2](#)) and we have no apostles and prophets. Scripture is our particular revelation and is our authority (as God's word).

*Who was present for the reading of the Law?* Notice that Israel refers both to those born in the nation and those who joined with Israel (including Rahab). God's covenant promises were always intended to be for all nations ([Gen 12:3](#); [18:18](#); [22:18](#); [Gal 3:7-9](#); [Rom 4:16-18](#)).

*Where did everyone stand for the reading of the Law?* Half of the nation stood in front of Mount Ebal and half in front of Mount Gerizim. Moses had commanded this twice in Deuteronomy ([Deut 11:29](#); [27:12-13](#)).

*What are the blessing and curse of the Law?* When Moses instructed Israel to read the Law at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, the Levites read a list of curses for disobedience and blessing for obedience and Israel would respond in affirmation.

Paul applies this theme of blessing and cursing in [Galatians 3](#). Those who are **blessed** as descendants of Abraham are those who share Abraham's faith. [Galatians 3:7-9](#) "7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the **sons** of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the **gospel** beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be **blessed**." 9 So then, **those who are of faith are blessed** along with Abraham, the man of faith." We are all under the **curse**, because we all sin. [Galatians 3:10-12](#) "10 For all who rely on **works** of the law are under a **curse**; for it is written, "**Cursed** be everyone who does not **abide** by all things written in the Book of the Law, and **do** them." 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." 12 But **the law is not of faith**, rather "The one who **does** them shall live by them." But **Christ bore the curse for us**, so that we might receive the blessing in Him. [Galatians 3:13-14](#) "13 Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— 14 so that **in Christ Jesus the blessing** of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so

that we might receive the promised Spirit through **faith**.” The purpose of the Law was to point to the need of a Redeemer (Jesus).

### Summary

*How does this passage show both justice and grace?* The Law demonstrates God’s justice. Each person is judged according to his deeds and everyone is found guilty. We also see God’s grace by those who were not born into Israel are still part of the covenant.

*In what ways can we make Scripture central in our lives?* Scripture should be the center of the church (reading, discussing, preaching, decision-making). Scripture should be the center of our homes (reading, discussing, decision-making). Scripture should be the center of our individual lives (reading, memorizing, meditating, discussing, decision-making).

## Covenant with Gibeon

### Israel made a covenant with Gibeon.

#### Gibeonite deception

[Joshua 9:1–15](#) “1 As soon as all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this, 2 they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel. 3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, 4 they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and took worn-out sacks for their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, 5 with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes. And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. 6 And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us.” 7 But the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you live among us; then how can we make a covenant with you?” 8 They said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who are you? And where do you come from?” 9 They said to him, “From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt, 10 and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were

beyond the Jordan, to Sihon the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth. 11 So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, ‘Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, “We are your servants. Come now, make a covenant with us.” ’ 12 Here is our bread. It was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey on the day we set out to come to you, but now, behold, it is dry and crumbly. 13 These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst. And these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey.” 14 So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD. 15 And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.”

*How did the Gibeonites respond differently than the other nations listed in verses 1-2?* Most of the nations joined together to fight against Israel ([Josh 9:1-2](#)). Gibeon schemed to deceive Israel ([Josh 9:3-4](#)). Both groups were motivated by fear ([Josh 9:9-10](#); cf. [Josh 2:10-11](#)). Both groups contrast with Rahab. She too feared God, but she repented and followed God in faith. These nations fought or deceived.

*How did Gibeon convince Israel they were from a far country?* They took provisions that implied a long journey (worn-out sacks and wineskins, worn-out sandals and clothes, dry and crumbly food).

*Why was Israel hesitant to make a covenant with someone who lived in that region?* God had commanded Israel to make no covenants with those who lived in that land (see below).

*In verse 15, how did Joshua respond to the Gibeonite deception?* Joshua made peace with Gibeon and made a covenant with them. A covenant is a binding relationship, meaning Israel was committed to a relationship with Gibeon.

*In verse 14, what did Israel not consider in their covenant with Gibeon?* Israel did not seek counsel from God. This is a stark contrast from [Joshua 8:30-35](#), where Israel commits to God’s Word. Now they are not seeking God’s word (although they still acknowledge it).

*In what way might their covenant with Gibeon have been against God’s will?* If Israel allowed these nations to remain, they would tempt them toward idolatry.

[Exodus 23:32-33](#) “32 You shall make no **covenant** with them and their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you **sin against me**; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a **snare** to you.”” [Exodus 34:12-14](#) “12 Take care, lest you make a **covenant** with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a **snare** in your midst. 13 You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim 14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God).” [Deuteronomy 7:2-4](#) “2 and when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no **covenant** with them and show no mercy to them. 3 You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would **turn away** your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.” **God was protecting Israel from temptation.** Practically speaking, one lesson we can learn from this is the importance of removing temptation. Some temptation is unavoidable, but we can often spare ourselves from sin by **removing temptation.**

### [Gibeonite Discovery](#)

[Joshua 9:16-27](#) “16 At the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, they heard that they were their neighbors and that they lived among them. 17 And the people of Israel set out and reached their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. 18 But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. 19 But all the leaders said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. 20 This we will do to them: let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them.” 21 And the leaders said to them, “Let them live.” So they became cutters of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, just as the leaders had said of them. 22 Joshua summoned them, and he said to them, “Why did you deceive us, saying, ‘We are very far from you,’ when you dwell among us? 23 Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.” 24 They answered Joshua, “Because it was told to your servants for a certainty that the LORD your God had commanded his

servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you—so we feared greatly for our lives because of you and did this thing. 25 And now, behold, we are in your hand. Whatever seems good and right in your sight to do to us, do it.” 26 So he did this to them and delivered them out of the hand of the people of Israel, and they did not kill them. 27 But Joshua made them that day cutters of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place that he should choose.”

*How long did it take to discover the Gibeonite deception?* Israel discovered that the Gibeonites lived in the land three days later. This shows they made a hasty decision. Covenants should not be hasty. For example, a person should not be hasty in choosing a spouse.

*In verse 18, why did Israel not attack the Gibeonite cities?* They did not attack Gibeon because their leaders had made an oath to the Gibeonites. They were bound even under deceptive circumstances.

*According to verse 20, in whose name had Israel sworn an oath to the Gibeonites?* They swore by the Lord (Yahweh) (cf. [Josh 9:18](#)). Their faithfulness reflected God’s faithfulness. Think of the implications of that. If I bear the name Christian, then my actions reflect Christ.

*What ongoing role did the Gibeonites serve in Israel?* The Gibeonites chopped wood and drew water for Israel. They were servants in Israel. But there are much deeper implications to this. Israel was in a covenant with God and made a covenant with Gibeon. Israel brought Gibeon into the covenant with God on Gibeon’s terms, not God’s terms.

[Deuteronomy 29:1–13](#) “1 These are the words of the **covenant** that the **Lord commanded** Moses to make **with the people of Israel** in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb. 2 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 3 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. 4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. 5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not **worn out** on you, and your sandals have not **worn off** your feet. 6 You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink,



that you may know that I am the Lord your God. 7 And when you came to this place, **Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan** came out against us to battle, but we defeated them. 8 We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. 9 Therefore **keep** the words of this covenant and **do** them, that you may prosper in all that you do. 10 “You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, 11 your little ones, your wives, and the **sojourner** who is in your camp, from the one who **chops your wood** to the one who **draws your water**, 12 so that you may enter into the **sworn covenant of the LORD your God**, which the LORD your God is making with you today, 13 that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” Israel brought Gibeon into a covenant with God on Gibeon’s terms, not God’s terms.

*How might Israel have prevented this covenant with Gibeon? They might have prevented this covenant if they had prayed and sought God’s will ([Josh 9:14](#)).*

## Covenants with unbelievers

[2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1](#) “14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, 18 and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” 1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

Although verse 14 is often applied to marriage (and rightfully so), this passage is primarily about the church. *With whom should a church avoid making a partnership?* We should not have a partnership with **unbelievers**. This does not mean that we should separate from unbelievers. We see that point clearly in



Jesus' life. This means that we should not have a covenant relationship with unbelievers (and this applies in marriage as well).

*What (who) is the temple of God?* The church (and the individual) is the temple of God. There is no temple building today. The temple was to be the place where God dwelt with His people. [Exodus 25:8](#) “8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst” (cf. [1 Kings 6:11-13](#)). In the Gospels, Jesus' presence was God dwelling with His people ([John 1:14](#); [Matt 1:23](#)). The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. So individually, we are the temple of God. But the Bible most often refers to the assembled church, not the individual, as the temple of God.

Verse 16 quotes [Leviticus 26:12](#). *How does verse 16 describe the relationship between the church and God?* We are the people of God. This refers to those who are in Christ. All of God's covenants and promises are fulfilled in Christ, the true Israel ([Gal 3:16](#)). Those who are in Christ are the people of God ([Hos 1:10](#); [2:23](#); [1 Pet 2:9-10](#); [Rom 9:25-26](#)).

Verse 17 quotes [Isaiah 52:11](#). *How does verse 17 describe the relationship between the church and the world?* God commands the church to be separate from the world. Again, this does not mean that we do not interact with the world or that we go into isolation. This means that we are distinct in relation to holiness. We reject sin and devote ourselves to God, which are distinctive actions that demonstrate faith.

## Summary

*What are some ways that Christians covenant with (or compromise with) the world?*

*Based on the mistakes of [Joshua 9](#), what are some steps a Christian or a church can take to avoid wrong relationships with the world?* First, we can devote ourselves to Scripture (cf. [Joshua 8:30-35](#)). Second, we can devote ourselves to prayer (cf. [Joshua 9:14](#)). Third, we can commit ourselves to holiness (separation from sin and the world; devotion to our covenant relationship with God) (cf. [Joshua 9](#)).