

Then he said to them: Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.... There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” (Luke 21:10-11, 25-31, NIV)

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Th. 2:8-10, NIV)

The “Who” of the Crisis

Who will be impacted by the great crisis that will shake the earth at the end of the age?

According to the Bible, all the inhabitants of the earth will feel the impact of **the shakings** that are appointed to come upon the earth at the end of the age (see, e.g., Is. 24; Lk. 21:35), although not all will not be impacted by them in the same way or to the same degree. Many people will be caught off guard by the events of the last days; they will have no idea what is happening and will be terrified at the events that are unfolding on the earth (see, e.g., Mt. 24:38-39; Lk. 21:26).

Some people will join fully in the great and final rebellion against God; these will experience the full brunt of God’s judgment and wrath (see, e.g., Rev. 6:15-17, 14:6-12, 16:1-21). The nation of

Israel, upon which God will pour out the covenant curses (see Lev. 26; Dt. 28) one final and climactic time prior to being rescued by Jesus at his return (see, e.g., Zech. 12; Is. 59:12; Rm. 11:26-27), will go through a particularly difficult time as Gentile armies attack Jerusalem and take many of its inhabitants into captivity (see, e.g., Jer. 30:4-7; Zech. 14).

As for **Jesus 'followers**, they, too, will face great tests of faith and will suffer many afflictions in those days. Some will be put to death for their allegiance to Jesus (see, e.g., Rev. 6:9-11, 12:11, 17:6), while others will be called to endure patiently through imprisonment and captivity (Rev. 13:10). Some will be called to trust God for protection and guidance in dramatic ways as they flee various situations (Lk. 17:30-35), while others will serve as Jesus 'hands and feet to the Jewish people in their time of trouble and greatest need (see, e.g., Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 12:6). All of Jesus 'people will need to trust God in radical ways for their daily bread (see, e.g., Rev. 13:16-17, 14:9-12).

The “What” of the Crisis

What is the “end of the age,” and what will happen when it arrives?

The “end of the age,” according to the Bible, is the period of history just prior to the return of Jesus. It marks the beginning of the transition from the “present evil age,” (Gal. 1:4) in which we currently live, to the glorious “age to come” (see, e.g., Mk. 10:30), when all things will be made new (Mt. 19:28; Rev. 21:5).

In the Bible the end of the age is compared to a woman in labor (Mt. 24:8). Just as the contractions of a woman in labor increase

in intensity and grow closer together until the baby is finally born, so, too, at the end of the age, the “birth pains” being experienced by the earth—earthquakes, famines, wars, cosmic disturbances, etc.—will become more and more fierce, with shortening intervals between them, until Jesus returns and the age to come is finally “born.”

At the end of the age, the earth will “reel like a drunkard,” will “sway like a hut in the wind,” and will be “split asunder” and “thoroughly shaken” (Is. 24:19-20, NIV). The nations “will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea,” and people “will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Lk. 21:25-26, NIV).

At one point, a Satanically-empowered world leader—referred to in the Bible variously as the “man of lawlessness” (2 Th. 2:3), the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8), and the “Anti-Christ/Messiah” (1 Jn. 2:18)—will appear on the scene and demand loyalty and worship from the inhabitants of the earth (2 Th. 2; Rev. 13). This will mark the beginning of the “hard labor,” which will last for 3.5 years (Dan. 7:25, 12:7; Rev. 12:6, 12:14, 13:5).

After this time, Jesus will return to the earth in power and glory and deliver his followers and raise them to life (1 Th. 4), come to the rescue of Israel and Jerusalem (Zech. 14), and bring the Anti-Christ to nothing “by the splendor of his coming” (1 Th. 2:8, NIV).

The “When” of the Crisis

When will the crisis take place?

When Jesus discussed the end of the age with his disciples, he did not tell them exactly when he would be coming back to the earth, but instead discoursed on some of the events and phenomena—“**signs**”—for which his people are to watch and by which they will know that the end of the age is upon them.

Although we do not know exactly when Jesus will appear, we do know from the Scriptures that the same generation that sees the earth go into “labor” will also see the baby’s “birth” (see Mt. 24:30-35; Lk. 21:29-33). We also know that when the “man of lawlessness” (2 Th. 2:3) appears, this will mark the beginning of the “hard labor,” which will last for 3.5 years (Dan. 7:25, 12:7; Rev. 12:6, 12:14, 13:5). At the end of this time Jesus will return “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30).

Irrespective of how close a generation actually may or may not be to the end of the age and the Second Coming, the church is mandated by God to herald the Day of the Lord and the coming of our King with great urgency and boldness (see, e.g., Dt. 32:34-43; Jb. 19:25; Is. 2:12; Jer. 31:38-40; Ezek. 37:11-14; Dan. 12:1-9; Jl. 2:1-2; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:14-16; Hag. 2:6-7; Zech. 14:3-4; Mt. 3:1-12; Lk. 10:8-12; Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 11:22; 1 Pt. 4:7; Jm. 5:8; 1 Jn. 2:18; Jud. 14-15). Every disciple of Messiah Jesus is called by God to pray, proclaim the gospel, and live as if the intense events of the last days—which will culminate in the Second Coming—could begin unfolding tomorrow (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:29-31; 1 Pt. 4:7).

The “Where” of the Crisis

Where will the crisis at the end of the age take place?

In accord with what was stated above, there is no region of the world that will not be touched in some way and to some degree by the shakings of the end of the age (Is. 24; Lk. 21:35). However, even though the end-time crisis can be conceived as a worldwide phenomenon on some level, in end-times-related matters the Scriptures focus their attention primarily on the nation of Israel and the regions and peoples surrounding it (Zech. 12-14; Mal. 4).

The Anti-Christ empire will most likely be a Middle Eastern empire¹, and Jerusalem is where the ruler of that empire, the “Anti-Christ” or “man of lawlessness”, will “**proclaim himself to be God**” (2 Th. 2:4, NIV) and demand worship (Rev. 13). The Anti-Christ and his armies will launch a fierce and brutal assault against Israel and Jerusalem, but will be overthrown by Jesus when he returns (see, e.g., Zech. 12-14; Rev. 19).

¹ Joel Richardson, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist* (Washington, D.C. : New York: WND Books ; distributed by Midpoint Trade Books, 2012).

The “Why” of the Crisis

Why is God going to send great shakings and judgments at the end of the age?

According to the Bible, God is going to shake the earth at the end of the age because the **earth’s inhabitants are guilty of violating certain divinely-instituted covenant** requirements.

Noahide Laws (Covenant)

After the Flood, God told Noah and his descendants that they **must not do** the kinds of evil things that had resulted in an outpouring of his wrath in the Flood event. Jewish teachers and interpreters concluded from their close study of Genesis 6-9 that there are seven laws that are applicable:

“ to all people, in all places”:

1. Do not murder
2. Do not commit adultery
3. Do not commit idolatry
4. Do not curse God’s name
5. Do not steal
6. Do not eat meat (or blood) from a living animal
7. Establish a court of law.” 2

God issued these commands in context to the “everlasting covenant” (Gen. 9:16) that he made with Noah, Noah’s descendants (*with the entire human race, since all post-Flood human beings trace their descent to Noah*), and all living creatures (Gen. 9).

When God later entered into covenant with the people of **Israel at Mt. Sinai**, he entrusted even greater and more specific wisdom and understanding concerning his will and righteous ways to them than he had to post-Flood humanity in general, enhancing, amplifying, extending, adding to, applying, and expounding upon his previous instruction (Exodus-Deuteronomy).

God’s holy character, righteous ways, and supreme authority are assumed in, and made known through, his covenants, and therefore to violate or disregard them is tantamount to rejecting and rebelling against God himself.

In Isaiah 24, God cites *humanity’s violation* of the “everlasting covenant” (Is. 24:5) as his reason for heaping calamity on the world at the end of the age. Both the land of Israel and the regions of the earth inhabited by Noah’s non-Jewish descendants are defiled by bloodshed, and therefore must be cleansed through judgment (Is 1:15, 1:21, 4:4, Is. 24:5; cf. Gen. 9:4-6; Num. 35:33; Rom. 1:26-32).

All humanity is guilty of violating the everlasting covenant, and therefore the whole world is going to be shaken as God unleashes his covenant curse on the earth (Is. 24:6). However, because **Israel was entrusted with greater responsibility and understanding concerning God’s ways** (Ex. 19:1-6), her experience of the shakings will be even more intense as God unleashes the curses of her own

particular covenant with him (Lev. 26; Dt. 28; cf. Jer. 30:4-7; Mal. 4). In the words of Luke 12:48, “Everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required” (NRSV). Consequently, “there will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile” (Rom. 2:9, NLT).

Divine Dilemma: YHWH (Judgment and Mercy)

As serious and worthy of punishment as covenant violation is in God’s eyes, however, his desire is to *show mercy* to his creation (Rom. 2:4; 2 Pt. 3:9) and to renew human beings into his image (Jeremiah 31:31, Col. 3:10). This brings us to some of his other reasons for sending the coming shakings. Although both Jew and Gentile, according to the Bible, deserve to be eternally pummeled by God’s covenant curses (Mt. 25:41), through the Messiah’s death God has made a way for those curses to be removed (Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:13-14).

When people **repent of their sins** (of their covenant violations) and place their faith in the gospel, God forgives them and therefore does not pour out on them the wrath that he otherwise would. When people go through difficulties, they sometimes become more responsive to God. “Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pt. 3:9), God will use the end-times shakings to “rattle” people back to their senses and draw them to repentance and faith in the gospel (Rev. 11:13), in which case he will remove his wrath from them and

number them among his people. Not all, however, will respond as he desires (Rev. 9:20-21). As for those who already know him upon entering the last days, God will use the trials they will face during that time to purify them, test their loyalty, refine their faith, and prepare them for Jesus' Second Coming (Rom. 5:3; Eph. 5:25-27; James 1:2-4; 1 Pt. 1:17; Rev. 19:6-9).

2 NIV First-Century Study Bible, 15.

The “How” of the Crisis

How will we know when the earth has entered the last days and the return of Jesus is near?

Although Jesus did not give his disciples an exact timeline as to when he would return to the earth, he did outline some of the events and phenomena that would signal the nearness of his return. When his disciples **observed these various “signs”** unfolding and beginning to take place, they were to take heart and watch expectantly, knowing that their “salvation” and the “Kingdom of God” were in fact “near” (Lk. 21:28, 31, NLT).

The signs that make up the “beginning of birth pains” (Mt. 24:8) include:

1. Conflicts between kingdoms and nations
2. Earthquakes
3. Famines
4. Pestilences (Mt. 24:7-8; Lk. 21:10-11).

The closer the earth gets to Jesus' return, the more these phenomena will increase in frequency and intensity. At one point the earth will move into “hard labor” when a Satanically-empowered world leader referred to in the Bible as “the man of lawlessness” (2 Th. 2:3), or the “Anti-Christ” (1 Jn. 2:18), declares himself to be God in the (to-be-rebuilt) temple in Jerusalem (2 Th. 2) and demands worship and loyalty from the world's inhabitants (Rev. 13). This event, along with other accompanying signs in the heavens (such as the rising of a blackened sun and a blood-red moon; see Is. 13:10; Jl. 2:30-31; Mt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-13), will mark the beginning of the last 3.5 years before Jesus returns (Dan. 7:25, 12:7; Rev. 12:6, 12:14, 13:5).

Nation of Israel

One other important biblical, end-of-the-age “[signpost](#)” worth mentioning here is that of the nation of Israel. There are a significant number of clearly yet-to-be-fulfilled biblical prophecies (Joel 2-3; Ezek. 37-38; Zech. 12-14; Mal. 3-4; 2 Th. 2) that presuppose the following conditions for their fulfillment:

1) a substantial number of Jewish people living in the actual land of Israel who have not yet acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah

2) Jews controlling and living in the actual historical city of Jerusalem

3) the city of Jerusalem being the focus of controversy and the center of world and regional attention

4) the existence of a functioning Jewish temple in the city of Jerusalem.

When the stage of history looks like this, we know that the end the of the age truly is upon us and that Jesus is coming soon.

Then the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” (Genesis 18:17-19, NIV)

Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, By myself I have sworn,” this is the Lord s declaration: Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command.” (Genesis 22:15-18, CSB—Christian Standard Bible)

The "Who" of the Covenants

With whom does God enter into covenant in the Bible?

In the Bible we encounter a number of covenants to which **God is one of the parties.**

1. We read of God's covenant "with the day" and "with the night" (Jeremiah 33:19-20)
2. God's covenant with Adam (Hosea 6:7)
3. God's covenant with Noah and his offspring and with all living creatures (Genesis 9:8)
4. God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22, 26, 28, 35)
5. God's covenant with the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20, 24)
6. God's covenant with Israel in Moab (Deuteronomy 29:1)
7. God's covenant with Phinehas (Numbers 25:12-13)
8. God's covenant with the Levitical priests (Jeremiah 33:21, Malachi 2:8)
9. God's covenant with David (2 Samuel 7)

10. God's new or everlasting covenant of peace with Israel (Dt. 30, Is. 49:6-8, Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 37) and the nations (Isaiah 42:5-9, 49:6-8).

The "What" of the Covenants

What is a covenant? What promises does God make in the covenants to which he is one of the parties?

Covenants were an important part of the cultural world in which the various books of the Bible were written. In the ancient world, covenants were an alliance-forming mechanism with legal, binding force, by means of which various groups, nations, or individuals forged solemn, and even family-like, bonds of loyalty with one another. (1, note the source below)

When promises are embedded in a **covenantal format**, they are sworn into effect with an oath and are therefore loaded with great weightiness and solemnity. To break a promise solemnly sworn into effect by the invocation of God's name was (and still is) a serious offense in the eyes of God.

In the Bible there are **two different types** of covenant into which God enters with a human party, both of which have their own particular features and formats: The **suzerain-vassal covenant** (in which the superior party imposes certain **covenant terms** on a vassal party), and the **royal grant covenant** (in which the superior party **grants a gift or reward** to a vassal/servant whose loyalty has been proven and demonstrated over time). According to the Bible, the "gospel," or good news, is built on specific promises that God made through various covenants with people in the past. Some of these covenants are suzerain-vassal covenants, while others are royal grant covenants.

Since the promises of the biblical covenants are part of God's one, overall plan to restore the creation, they are sometimes referred to simply as "the promise" (Rom. 4:13-14). In his covenants, God promised that he would:

1. Faithfully and forever sustain the created order, causing the day and the night to come "at their appointed time" (Jeremiah 33:20, ESV)

2) Issue a fatal blow, through Eve's offspring, to the original deceiver of humanity, the serpent, and his offspring (Gen. 3:15)

3) Bless Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their offspring, multiply them greatly, make them into a great nation and community of nations, give them the land of Israel as an everlasting possession, and bless all the nations through them (Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22, 26, 28, 35)

4) Eventually overturn death through bodily resurrection, so as to allow Abraham himself and his righteous offspring to inherit the land promised to them (Gen. 15:8, 50:24-25; Ezekiel 37)

5) Draw the people of Israel into a time of national repentance, purify their hearts, and gather them back to their land after a time of disciplinary exile among the nations (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 4, 28, 30)

6) Raise up a king—a "Christ," or "Messiah"—from King David's line to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chronicles 17), from where he would rule Israel and the nations in justice and righteousness forever (Isaiah 2, 9, 11, 42)

7) Everlasting Covenant through the mission of his chosen Servant, enter into a new and everlasting covenant of peace with the people of Israel (Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 37) and the nations (Isaiah 42:5-9, 49:6-8) through which they would be forgiven of their sins, enabled to obey God through the work of his Spirit on their hearts and minds, and *qualified to inherit* the things previously promised (Isaiah 42:5-9, 49:6-8, 52-53; Jeremiah 30-31; Ezekiel 36-37).

¹ See, e.g., Elmer B. Smick, 282 ברה,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 128; Scott Hahn, “Covenant,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

The “When” of the Covenants

When did God make the various promises of the biblical covenants?

Day and Night

In the Bible we read of God entering into (or confirming or renewing) the above-mentioned covenants at different historical junctures and in a variety of contexts and circumstances. Although we are not told explicitly when it was that God made a covenant “with the day” and “with the night” (Jer. 33:19-20), the context assumed by this statement is either the beginning, when God brought these “covenant partners” into existence (Genesis 1), or the post-Flood context, in which God promises to sustain the day-and-night cycle (Genesis 8:22), or perhaps *both*.

Adam

As for God's covenant with Adam, the description of the Fall in covenantal terms (Hos. 6:7) implies that God entered into covenant with Adam prior to the Fall. (Although the word "covenant" does not explicitly appear in the early chapters of Genesis where the story of Adam and Eve is recounted [Gen. 1-3], some of the features typical of ancient covenants are present there.)

Noah

As for God's covenant with Noah and his offspring, this covenant was formed in the third millennium B.C. after the Flood (Gen. 9:8).

Abraham

As for God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this covenant was established, confirmed, and renewed over a period of time and in context to a series of events in the early second millennium B.C. (see, e.g., Gen. 12, 15, 17, 22, 26, 28, 35).

Nation of Israel

As for God's covenant with the nation of Israel, this covenant was first established at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19-24) in the second half of the second millennium B.C., and then was subsequently confirmed and renewed at different times in Israel's history.

Priestly Tribe of Levi

It was not long after the initial formation of his covenant with the nation of Israel at Sinai that God entered into a covenant with the priestly tribe of Levi in general (Ex. 27:21, 32:25-29; Num. 3, 18; Dt. 10:6-9, 33:8-11; cf. Jer. 33:17-16 and Mal. 2:19),

Phinehas

During Israel's time in the wilderness, into a covenant with one Levitical priest in particular, named Phinehas (Num. 25).

David

As for God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 7), this covenant was formed in the early first millennium B.C. while David was reigning as Israel's king.

New, Everlasting, Renewed *for all nations*

As for God's new or everlasting covenant of peace with Israel (Dt. 30; Is. 49:6-8; Jer. 31; Ezek. 37) and the nations (Is. 42:5-9, 49:6-8), this covenant was established through the events of **Jesus' first coming** (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8, 9:15, 12:24), and serves as the means through which he prepares his Jewish and Gentile followers for his **Second Coming**, at which time the entire nation of Israel will enter into the new covenant and, on the basis of its provisions, will join all other *righteous Jews* throughout history in receiving everything previously promised to the nation in the covenants (Jer. 31; Ezek. 37, 40-48; Zech. 12; Mt. 19:28).

The “Where” of the Covenants

Where or at what **places** does God enter into covenant in the Bible?

According to the Bible, God entered into covenant with Adam (Hos. 6:7) in the [Garden of Eden](#).

As for God’s covenant with Noah and his offspring and with all creatures, this was formed at [Mt. Ararat](#), which is in modern day Turkey (Gen. 8-9).

As for God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this was established and confirmed at various places within the land of [Israel](#) (see, e.g., Gen. 12, 15, 17, 22, 26, 28, 35). [Mt. Sinai](#), located somewhere in the [Sinai Peninsula](#) or in what is today northwestern [Saudi Arabia](#), is where God established his covenant with the people of Israel (Ex. 20, 24); he also entered into covenant with them in the [land of Moab](#), an ancient kingdom that bordered the [Dead Sea](#) on the east and which today is part of the country of [Jordan](#) (Dt. 29:1).

It was at a place called [Shittim](#) on the plains of [Moab](#) (Num. 25:1, 33:49) that God made his covenant with the Levite priest Phinehas (Num. 25:12-13), while [Mt. Sinai](#) and the wilderness of Sinai served as the initial context for his covenant with Levi (Ex. 27:21, 32:25-29; Num. 1, 3, 8, 18; Dt. 10:6-9, 33:8-11; cf. Jer. 33:17-16 and Mal. 2:19; cf. also Dt. 10:8, where the priestly calling of the Levites is reiterated).

The city of Jerusalem is where David was when God entered into covenant with him (2 Sam. 7), and, as the place where the blood of the new covenant was poured out through Jesus’ crucifixion (Luke. 22:20), also served as the context for the inauguration of the new covenant.

The “Why” of the Covenants

Why did God enter into covenants?

In the ancient world, entering into a covenant was an extremely **serious matter**. Covenants were put into effect through the swearing of a solemn oath (in which deity was invoked), and therefore to **violate a covenant or disregard its terms was to invite divine punishment and discipline**.

Although God could easily have made promises independently of a covenant, he wanted to assure his people, in the strongest terms possible, of his unwavering loyalty to his plan of salvation and of the complete reliability of what he had pledged to do for the sake of his people and the rest of creation.

By tying his promises to **covenants and swearing to their dependability** by his very self (as the Creator, there was no one greater by whom he could swear a covenantal oath), he loaded them with the utmost sanctity, weight, and solemnity (Heb. 6:13-20). This is meant to serve as a powerful source of strength to God’s people, who are sometimes called to suffer, or perhaps even die, as a demonstration of their allegiance to the Creator and of their faith in his promises (see, e.g., Jm. 1:12; Heb. 6:19). Through his covenants, God assures us that not a single word he has ever spoken will fail. His promises are worth living and dying for, and faith in them will be vindicated in the end when Jesus returns.

The “How” of the Covenants

How are covenants formed in the Bible?

Many of the things that characterized covenant formation in the external or secular ancient world generally are also observed in the formation of covenants in the Bible.

Two types of covenants in the Bible to which **God himself** is one of the parties typically fall into one of two categories: The suzerain-vassal covenant (in which the superior party imposes certain covenant terms on a vassal party), and the royal grant covenant (in which the superior party grants a gift or reward to a vassal/servant whose loyalty has been proven and demonstrated over time).

Features and Details of Covenants

Features of suzerain-vassal covenants usually included some or all of the following: 2

1) a preamble (a statement in which the suzerain is identified, with reference to the vassal possibly being made as well)

2) a historical prologue (statements in which the history of the relationship between the suzerain and the vassal is recounted)

3) various stipulations (covenant obligations that the suzerain places upon the vassal, of whom obedience and total loyalty is expected)

4) a document clause (the terms of the covenant are written down, and the covenant partners commit to reviewing them regularly)

5) witnesses (deities are called upon as witnesses to, and as enforcers of, the covenant; in biblical covenants things other than gods serve as covenant witnesses, since idolatry is forbidden)

6) solemn oaths (the parties to the covenant swear to follow through on their promises and covenantal commitments on pain of divine sanction and punishment)

7) blessings and curses (blessings are invoked in case of faithfulness and obedience, while curses are invoked in case of unfaithfulness and disobedience)

8) ritual enactments (the significance and meaning of the covenant is dramatically or symbolically acted out)

9) the use of relationship-defining language (certain terms may be used to signal the nature of, or to add warmth and affection to, the covenantal relationship—such as “lord” and “servant,” or “father” and “son”)

10) signs and reminders (various objects or actions are chosen to serve as reminders of the covenant)

11) subsequent renewals (after the initial formation of the covenant, certain steps may be taken to confirm the covenant and ensure that it remains strong and its terms heeded from one generation to the next).

While some of the elements listed here might also be found in a royal grant covenant, there are also some differences. In a royal grant covenant, a suzerain/king **rewards a servant** for his or her continued and demonstrated loyalty, faith, and obedience. ³

Because a royal grant covenant is made as a reward for loyalty demonstrated *over a period of time*, it is not the vassal, but only the king/suzerain, who swears the oath in this kind of covenant. In other words, this covenant is made unilaterally, and only the king is bound by solemn oath in this covenant. Because of this, that which the king promises to the servant—such as a piece of land—is guaranteed and unilateral with respect to the specific person to whom it is granted. ⁴ The benefits of such a covenant may be extended to the servant's heirs and descendants, but only if they demonstrate the same kind of loyalty as the one to whom the royal grant was originally given: "The grant was normally perpetual, but the servant's heirs benefited from it only as they continued their father's loyalty and service." ⁵

² See, e.g., Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*, 5. print., Seminars in the history of ideas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977), 29–38; Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary v. 2 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 439; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, Nachdr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2009), 30.

³ *NET Bible Notes*, Gen. 15:6.

⁴ *NIV First-Century Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*