

Broken Vows

Making a vow to God seems to be a very much old covenant thing to do.

And in the old covenant, breaking a vow which had been made to God, (or an oath which had been sworn), had incredibly serious consequences.

In 2 Samuel 21 we read of a famine in Israel during the reign of David. The famine had gone on for three years, so David asked God why. The answer... Saul broke an oath.

Wow, Saul was already dead. He was the previous king.

The oath was sworn many years before Saul even started to be king. In fact, it was possibly sworn before Saul was even born.

You can read about the oath in Joshua 9. But basically when the Israelites were invading and conquering Canaan, some of the inhabitants, the Gibeonites, tricked them into making a peace treaty with them. The Israelites swore an oath not to kill the Gibeonites.

Decades later, Saul killed them. Well, many of them.

The consequence was that God punished the nation of Israel for their sins.

The way out was to ask the Gibeonites what compensation they would accept. And when that compensation was paid, Israel was released.

The compensation they demanded was the life of seven of Saul's descendants.

It's interesting that the famine didn't occur during Saul's reign, but not until David's. And it was not Saul who was punished for breaking the oath, but it was his descendants who gave their lives. But that's another story.

The key thing for now is that the breaking of the oath had consequences.

Ecclesiastes 5 says, "It is better not to make a vow, than to make a vow and not fulfil it".

Samson also made a vow. Well, actually his parents made it for him. He was a Nazirite - set apart to God, not to drink wine or to eat anything to do with grapes. Not to cut his hair or shave his head. And not to go near a dead body.

This is why Samson lost his strength. Because he broke his vow by cutting his hair.

Breaking that vow cost him his eyesight, and his freedom.

So... we see in the old covenant that if anyone broke a vow they had made to God then there were massive consequences, sometimes including death for thousands of people, sometimes affecting their descendants.

But that was thousands of years ago... before the cross... these days... nothing has changed.

There are still major consequences for breaking a vow made to God.

There is nothing about being a Christian that means you can get away with breaking a vow to God.

You are still better to not make one, than to make one and break it.

Of course, these days we rarely make vows to God. Except when we get married.

In Matthew 5, Yeshua said "don't even swear an oath"...

But we promise to be faithful until one of us dies. I'm sure at the time most of us have that as our intention. But can we be sure we will be? Do we understand what the consequence is if we break it?

Where did this kind of wedding vow come from? It's certainly not in the Bible. In the Bible getting married was just a matter of declaring that you were getting married and usually having some kind of celebration.

Perhaps we shouldn't even have wedding vows?

There is a consequence if we break them. For us individually and possibly for us as a nation.

The other place we make vows these days is when our church asks us to pledge in advance what our giving will be for the year. We make a vow so they can make a budget. I think both sides of that equation are wrong, but that's another article all together.

So. Let's **not** make vows to God that we might break. Let's remember that if we do there could be very serious consequences for us and for others.

And finally, if you *have* broken a vow to God then you need to talk with him about it. If it involved another person then you need to ask them what compensation they will accept to release you. Otherwise, there will continue to be consequences - if not for you, then for your children.