

# **LESSON TWO**

## **The Noachic Covenant**

### **Genesis 9:8-17**

**(For Group and Sunday School Leaders)**

Before we dig into the study of the Noachic Covenant, let us look at what took place after Adam and Eve were booted out of the Garden. It is a period that is full of evil and what is abundantly evident is the fact that God's good, created order has been corrupted by human rebellion. The people have done what God has asked them to do; that is to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). Unfortunately, rather than filling the earth with image-bearers who reflect God's glory, they have instead filled the earth with sin. They chose to trust their eyes and follow the lusts of their hearts. At its core, this is the nature of sin.

As Adam and Eve began to live outside of the presence of God, sin became the dominant theme. God saw that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 5:5). Evil prevailed and there was much chaos and disorder that pained God immensely even to the point where He was "sorry that He had made man on the earth..." (Genesis 5:6). Humankind became so corrupt that God was moved to bring a radical judgment on His creation. God saw that the conscience of man was constantly bent toward evil. It makes sense that God felt the need to destroy His creation because it had become so polluted that it was not capable of being redeemed. But this is not just about God's destruction of mankind. Rather through the story of Noah, God offers a clear picture of the saving mercy of God. In the midst of humanity's sin and rebellion, God made a way for the salvation of the human race through Noah and the Ark. Had Noah and his family not stood out by God's grace from the wickedness of their day, there would have been a new beginning on the part of God that would have omitted all of us! Mercifully, God provided Noah and his family with the ark to escape the floodwaters. The story of Noah is a powerful picture of Jesus Christ in whom salvation would come to everyone who believed in him. Jesus would one day be lifted high above the floodwaters of our sin to endure the full wrath of God. By putting our hope in Jesus, we can be rescued like Noah and his family.

***Read Genesis 6:5-9; 8:20-22; 9:8-17***

#### **Questions:**

- 1. Some might argue that it was unjust for God to destroy—utterly destroy—the whole earth. You say?**

God is the holy and just judge of all creation, and he has the right as God to do with his creation as he wishes. But he is not an impulsive, vindictive God like the gods of the myths. He is not bloodthirsty. He is patient and longsuffering, the Bible tells us. But he will not put up with unrepentant sin forever. He saw that the world was wicked, that they only thought of evil continually: "And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth'" (Gen. 6:13). The very earth they enjoy and exploit, the ground that is cursed because of man's wickedness, will be instrumental in exacting the curse upon them.

Sin is such an offense to God that he could not be God if he didn't respond to it. His holiness is too great to turn a blind eye to wickedness. — Jared C. Wilson, *The Story of Everything: How You, Your Pets, and the Swiss Alps Fit into God's Plan for the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

**2. Paul said, “We preach Christ crucified.” We always do well to look at the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. How does the ark remind us of Christ?**

God’s promise back then is a foreshadow of that day still to come when the curse will finally be eradicated from the earth, from pole to pole and from east to west. God’s plan of redemption is gigantic. The vision he has for the world, then, is not destruction, as some Christians foresee, but redemption, restoration. “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea,” Habakkuk 2:14 tells us. We will be flooded again but this time with living water!

Clearly, the reconciliation God has in mind through the atoning work of Jesus Christ is both personal and super-personal. Because all things in the earth have been corrupted by man’s fall, God will be “reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19) and putting “all things in subjection under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:27). — Matt Chandler and Jared C. Wilson, *The Explicit Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 136.

**3. Gopher wood... what is the New Testament picture?**

Not coincidentally, I believe, due to its density and strength, gopher wood was the wood used to make coffins. “If any man come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross,” Jesus declared (Matthew 16:24).

Salvation begins with death. It begins when we say, “I’m dying to self. I no longer demand my own way, but rather give myself completely to You.” — Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary: Volume One: Genesis–Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 31–32.

**4. Verse 14. Pitch. What is the New Testament picture?**

This is the only time in the Old Testament where the Hebrew word *kapher* is translated “pitch.” In the seventy other passages this word is used, it is translated “atonement”—a wonderful word that essentially means “at-one-ment.” Just as the salvation God provided Noah was surrounded by the pitch of atonement, so God provided us “at-one-ment” with Him by sending His Son to die for our sin. — Jon Courson, *Jon Courson’s Application Commentary: Volume One: Genesis–Job* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 32.

**5. What do we learn about ourselves from this story?**

Nowhere in the Bible is there a better description of the total depravity of man than in Genesis 6:5. Total depravity doesn’t mean man is always as bad as he could be, nor that every man is as bad as every other man. It means that every part of his life is infected with depravity, that there is no part of his life not touched by the root of wickedness and evil.

Verse 5 says the wickedness was “great,” speaking of its intensity. There simply was no regard for right or wrong. They were in the full-blown manifestation of what we are moving toward in our day, the denial of absolute truth and morality. Whatever you want to do, you are free to do. Second, the wickedness affected “every intent of the thoughts of [the] heart.” Third, man did “only evil,” and did it “continually.” That is, mankind always chose wrong when faced with the choice between right

and wrong, and made that choice continually. Wickedness in Noah's day was like water blasting out of a fire hydrant—unrelenting and overwhelming. Overwhelming for all, that is, except Noah.

The wickedness permeated every level of man's being in Noah's day: mind, will, and emotions. The word "intent" (verse 5) is the word for desire or wishes, referring to man's will. The word "thoughts" refers to his mind. And "heart" means even his emotions were polluted by the preference for wickedness. Everything man did was infected by sin and wickedness. — David Jeremiah, *Heroes of the Faith: Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 47.

## **6. Genesis 6.9 says that Noah walked with God. What does it mean to walk with God?**

Devotion is not an activity; it is an attitude toward God. God is the focal point of the godly person's life. He or she seeks to practice the presence of God, to enjoy fellowship with God, to do all things to the glory of God, and to see God's name hallowed or honored on earth as it is in heaven.

Being devoted to God doesn't mean a person becomes an ascetic or withdraws from the mundane affairs of ordinary life. It does mean a person goes about the responsibilities of daily life with an eye focused on God. God is never far from his thoughts, and all of his activities are carried out with the aim of pleasing God.

The little-known biblical character of Enoch is an illustration of a godly man. The Bible says little about Enoch, but what it does say helps us understand what godliness is. Genesis 5:22 says Enoch "walked with God." The writer of Hebrews says he "pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). And in Jude 14–15 he is depicted as deeply concerned about the ungodly society in which he lived.

Enoch is my hero and role model. He was, as far as the biblical record shows, an ordinary man. He was not a leader like Moses, nor a warrior like David, nor an outstanding government official like Daniel. But he was a godly man. He walked with God, and he pleased God. That's what I want to do.

What does it mean to walk with God? According to five commentaries on Genesis that I consulted, it means to have a close, personal communion with God. It means that Enoch spent time focused on God. Enoch did not have the Bible as we have it today, but in whatever manner God communicated Himself to the people of old, Enoch took time to listen. And then he undoubtedly prayed to God. We don't really know how Enoch developed this close, personal relationship with God; but in whatever manner was appropriate for his time, he took advantage of it. — Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith: How to Mature in Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 131–132.

## **7. Genesis 9.8 – 17. "Covenant" is a central word in scripture. So much so that Christian institutions use it as a name (such as Covenant Seminary, where my boys attend). But, we don't use the word too much outside of church world. What does covenant mean? What is a covenant?**

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. There are two types of covenants: conditional and unconditional. A conditional or bilateral covenant is an agreement that is binding on both parties for its fulfillment. Both parties agree to fulfill certain conditions. If either party fails to meet their responsibilities, the covenant is broken and neither party has to fulfill the expectations of the

covenant. An unconditional or unilateral covenant is an agreement between two parties, but only one of the two parties has to do something. Nothing is required of the other party. — Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2002–2013).

## **8. How is a covenant different from a contract?**

More than a legal contract, a covenant is a sacred family bond. So, God's covenants in salvation history (with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus) reveal how he fathers his ever-expanding family and maintains its unity and solidarity. Accordingly, the laws of the covenant are not arbitrary stipulations forcefully imposed by a superior power, but rather expressions of God's fatherly wisdom, goodness, and love. We obey them in order to mature, so that we can love as God loves. When God makes and keeps covenants with his people, he is just being true to himself, for the Trinity is a covenantal being—three persons living in eternal communion. Covenant is what God does because covenant is who God is. — Scott Hahn, "Come to the Father": The Fact at the Foundation of Catholic Spirituality," in *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Bruce Demarest, Zondervan Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 87.

## **9. What is the Noahic Covenant?**

The Noahic Covenant, found in Genesis:9:8-17, is the promise that God made to Noah and his descendants after the flood which destroyed the world. The Noahic Covenant has several distinguishing features. First, it is an unconditional covenant. Second, it was made to Noah and all his descendants as well as "every living creature" and the earth in general (Genesis 9:8-10). Third, it was sealed with a sign, the rainbow.

The Noahic Covenant is an unconditional covenant because it does not depend upon anything Noah or his descendants had to do to fulfill the covenant. The promise is based upon God's faithfulness alone. Because of God's faithfulness to always do what He says He will do, we can know today with certainty that there will never be another worldwide flood as there was in the days of Noah, no matter how wicked mankind becomes. Neither the wickedness nor the righteousness of mankind affects this unconditional covenant. There is no "condition" under which God will take back His promise. This does not mean that God will never again destroy the earth, however. He has promised to one day destroy the earth by fire (2 Peter 3:10,11; Revelation 20:9, 21:1) in the terrible events known as the "day of the Lord."

After the flood God promised that He would never again send a worldwide flood to destroy the earth as an act of His divine judgment for sin. As a sign to remind Noah and his descendants of His covenantal promise, God "set the rainbow in the cloud" (Genesis 9:12-13). As we examine each covenant, we will see that each one comes with its own unique sign. The rainbow is the sign of the Noahic Covenant. The lesson to us is that when we see a rainbow we should always be reminded of God's faithfulness and His amazing grace. We should also be reminded that our God is a holy and righteous God who has a holy hatred for sin and rebellion. He will not allow sin to go unpunished forever. Also, just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to be saved in the ark, He also has provided a way for us to be saved through Jesus Christ. Noah and his family were saved from the wrath of God that came in the flood, just as those who are in Christ as saved from the "wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).