

*The Covenant with*

Noah

A  
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*Teaching Series*

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# The Noahic Covenant

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# The Noahic Covenant

## I. The Background of the Noahic Covenant

### 1. The BIG PICTURE of Genesis 1-9:

It's good to remember that there were two absolutely cataclysmic changes that took place on the earth in the early chapters of Genesis: *the fall of Adam*; and *the flood* during the time of Noah.<sup>1</sup>

A) *The FALL*: Before the fall, mankind was sinless and creation was untouched by the effects of sin. But when Adam fell, it wasn't just mankind that was cursed, but the earth itself (Genesis 3:17; 5:29).

B) *The FLOOD*: This was the second cataclysmic change. After the fall of man, the earth became cursed. But the flood that came upon the world also resulted in catastrophic effects on the earth.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. The TRANSITION PERIOD of Genesis 3-5:

#### A) *The Emergence of Two Lines*:

One of the things we learned from *Genesis 3:15* was that the Lord was going to put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, that is, between the children of God and the children of the Devil; between those who would trust in the coming Messiah and those who wouldn't. In *Genesis 4-5* we begin to see the fulfillment of these words. We begin to discern who are the seed of the serpent and who are the seed of God, and we begin to see the hostility between them that the Lord had spoken of. In Genesis 4, Cain shows himself to be of the seed of the serpent, and in the murder of his innocent brother Abel, we are pointed back to the enmity the Lord had spoken of in Genesis 3:15. After the death of Abel, Eve gives birth to Seth (4:25).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As Abraham Kuyper puts it: "We leave the researchers of nature's phenomena to their own speculations and calculations, although we admire their perseverance and the ingenuity wherewith they pursue their investigations, extending as far as the earth's core. The only thing of interest for our subject is that the factual condition of our earth corresponds to what Holy Scripture tells us, namely, that *our earth is no longer* what it was originally, but that *colossal cataclysms* took place on the earth's surface. Scripture records two such upheavals. In the first place, the original condition of the earth was changed immediately after *the fall*. Second, that condition underwent a colossal change through *the flood*. . . We simply cannot make a comparison with the earth *before* and *after* the curse. The world as God had originally created it at one time had perished under the curse, and an entirely different, sorrowful, and somber form of this same earth had now appeared. . . In that world thus ruptured and disheveled lived the race that had reproduced from Adam until Noah. But then followed a *second* powerful upheaval, one that in a violent manner again tore and fractured the earth that existed. This catastrophe wholly changed the earth's appearance, and it was upon that earth's surface, crushed and rearranged for a second time, that the current development of our race began after the flood." (*Common Grace*, Volume 1; Chapter 2, Sections 4-5). Kuyper goes on to declare: "Whereas this earth became what it now is through those two upheavals, Holy Scripture testifies to us both times concerning something about which the natural scientists know nothing, namely *this*, that both the first and the second upheaval were effected by *the wrath of God* against the *sin of our human race*. Once more for a third time, so this same Holy Scripture testifies, such a tremendous upheaval is awaiting us, one that will surpass both of those previous ones in terror, when 'the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved' (2Pet. 3:10)." (Chapter 2.5).

<sup>2</sup> Kuyper again says of the flood: "The traditions of the ancient peoples tell us little more than the recollection of an awesome event. And what the investigation of this earth, of its surface, of its mountains and its core have taught us thus far indicates that colossal changes have taken place, but it still lacks the graphic detail and exactitude of history. Meanwhile, this much is certain, that even if Holy Scripture had been silent about the flood, and even if the traditions of the peoples had contained no recollection of an event like this, simply observing the earth in its mountainous regions, and exploring the earth's surface in almost every country, would provide us the certainty that a massive cataclysm had taken place on this earth, one that altered the entire form of the earth and completely altered even its climatic patterns." (*Common Grace*, Volume 1, Chapter 2:3).

<sup>3</sup> We could mention a little more about Cain and Abel here. One question: why did the Lord accept Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's? The reason doesn't seem to relate to the offering itself, whether it was on account of the *type* of offering (animals over produce) or on account of the *quality* of the offering (firstlings of the flock over normal produce). After all, if Abel was accepted before God on account of the purity of his offering, the corollary truth is that we are accepted by God as Christians on account of the purity of our devotion—something we would never want to affirm. It seems that the reason for God's acceptance of Abel's offering and His rejection of Cain's offering didn't primarily have to do with *the offering*—but with *the*

















































The *picture* was the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-13).<sup>95</sup> The *pledge* was that God would never again send a flood to destroy every living thing on the earth (Genesis 9:14-15). So the rainbow served as a very tangible picture of God's solemn promise. It was a *guarantee* to all those in the ark that the same wrath that swept away the rest of the world would never, ever, come upon *them*. Dark clouds may come again—God never promised it wouldn't rain anymore—but God's promise was that the rain would never again be sent in wrath for the purpose of flooding the earth. And again, remember that the promise God is making here is not *only* a temporal promise being made to every living thing in the world. Isaiah 54 makes clear that this promise is meant to teach us about the Covenant of Grace.

So, what does this teach us as believers in Christ? Well, one thing it teaches us is that as believers, dark storms may still come upon us. God never promised that the Christian life would be easy, that there would be no storms. But though the dark rain clouds will sometimes come—*the flood of God's wrath never will*. As believers, what we can know as we go through seasons of hardship and distress and confusion is that there's not a single drop of God's anger in the trials that He sends us.<sup>96</sup>

We see this hinted at in another place in Scripture where we read about a rainbow. Revelation 4:3 says, "And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; *and there was a rainbow around the throne*, like an emerald in appearance." I love what one writer says about this: "this rainbow. . .[signifies] to us that memorial which God himself has of his everlasting kindness to his church in the midst of all thundering dispensations whatsoever, as a sign and symbol unto his church of the light of his countenance shining on them in their thickest and darkest clouds. . .And this New Testament rainbow excels that other [in that] the old was but as a half-moon rainbow, a semi-circle, whereas this is round about the throne, and encompasses it; it is a whole circle. . .So let God turn himself in various dispensations, and look which way he pleases, yet still he does, and must necessarily, view his church through his rainbow, putting him in mind of mercy."<sup>97</sup>

Another thing that the covenant sign of the rainbow teaches us as believers relates to what is taking place when we partake of the sacraments. We mentioned that covenant signs are the foundation for our understanding of the sacraments: they are tangible *pictures* of God's unwavering *promises*. So, we should be thinking about the sacraments—the Lord's supper and baptism—as we read what God says in Genesis 9:14-16. First, in verses 14-15, notice that God is *not* saying, "Noah, when you see the bow in the cloud, you remember the covenant I made with you." No, God is saying to Noah: When *you* see the bow in the cloud, "*I* will remember." It's like a husband who gives a ring to his wife on their wedding day, and he says to her, "when *you* look at that ring, *I* will remember that I gave myself to you." The emphasis here is *God's remembering*.<sup>98</sup> When *we* see the sign, *God* remembers His covenant.<sup>99</sup> So when there is a baptism taking place, or when we partake of the Lord's Supper—it's not just *us* remembering what God has done—it's *God himself* remembering. When *we* eat and drink of Christ's body and blood, *God* remembers the promises He's made to us.

<sup>95</sup> Why a rainbow? How does a rainbow act as a picture of the Lord's promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood? *First, because of how it is described:* We can better understand another function of the rainbow in understanding the word that is used to describe it. The original Hebrew doesn't actually say, "rainbow," it just says "bow," and it is the exact same word that is used throughout Scripture for describing the battle war-bow (bow and arrow). The Lord is saying His wrath has been spent, and now He is hanging up His war-bow in the sky for all to see as living proof. *Second, because of when it is displayed:* God had destroyed the earth with rain; and rain comes from clouds. And so the Lord said to Noah, "*It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh.*" (Genesis 9:14-15). In this way the rainbow is a picture of God's promise to never destroy the earth again with a flood. Even as the rain falls to the earth, the Lord sends with it the rainbow as a visible token of the promise He had made.

<sup>96</sup> "The rainbow is a divine security that the waters should return no more to destroy the earth; so the covenant of grace guarantees against the deluge of God's wrath, that it shall never return again to destroy any soul that by faith flees to Christ (Isa. 54:9)." (A.W. Pink, *Divine Covenants*).

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Goodwin, *Works*, V9, p79.

<sup>98</sup> "it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon God's memory, which is infinite and immutable. . .Oh, it is not my remembering God, it is God's remembering me which is the ground of my safety; it is not my laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant's laying hold on me. . .My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect." (*Charles Spurgeon*).

<sup>99</sup> The insights here were gratefully gleaned from Ligon Duncan's *Covenant Theology* course.

So verses 14-15 emphasize how when *we* look, *God* remembers. Then, in verse 16, God is the One who *will both look and remember* the sign: “When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant. . .” In verse 14, it's *us* who sees the rainbow and then God remembers His covenant. In verse 16, it's *God* who both looks at the sign and remembers His covenant. God gave the sign to Noah so that he could look at it—but isn't it glorious that even in giving the sign, *the important thing is not Noah looking at the sign and remembering God's promise—the important thing is that God looks at the sign and remembers His promise*—whether Noah looks at it or not. It's God's way of saying “I'm not going to forget the promise that I made to you. *You* may forget the promise I made to you—that's why I have to give you a sign—but *I will not* forget. . .”<sup>100</sup>

## 9. The FRUIT of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the heart of the Christian life*

Let's turn back to Genesis 6:9. We looked at this passage before and saw that *Noah wasn't chosen because he was righteous—but rather Noah was righteous because he was chosen*. That is, Noah was changed into a righteous man only because God had first chosen him and saved him by grace. So earlier, we basically focused on what verse 9 *doesn't* mean; now we're going to focus in on what it *does* mean. And we read in verse 9, “. . .Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.” Now, the first thing we need to understand is that when Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, *it doesn't mean that he was perfect*. When you read through the Psalms and constantly see the contrast between “the righteous” and “the wicked,” it's not contrasting perfect people and sinners—there are no perfect people. It's talking about those who know and love and follow God and those who don't. And it's the same thing here. When Scripture says that Noah was righteous and blameless, it's saying that he was a man of character; a man of integrity; a man who feared and loved and followed God—and his life proved it. *Noah's life backed up his profession*.

So, on the one hand, Noah wasn't a hypocrite. He lived out what he preached to others. He was a holy man. But also, on the other hand, Noah's righteousness wasn't just an *outward* righteousness. A lot of people thought the Pharisees of Jesus' day were a pretty righteous group of people, but the Savior called them “sons of hell” because their righteousness was nothing more than an external shell done for the applause of others. But Noah's righteousness wasn't like that—it was a true righteousness that went much deeper than just outward behavior. We're told that he was a man *who walked with God* (6:9). Noah was a righteous man because he was a man who lived in communion with God.

And this is the essence of the Christian life; walking with God. Now, remember, Noah was a preacher; Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was “a preacher of righteousness.” But that's not what characterized his life. What characterized his life was that he was a man who walked with God. It wasn't what Noah did—it wasn't his occupation or job title or even daily activities that God was concerned about—*it wasn't what Noah did* but *who he was* that God cared about. *God cares about who we are*. The goal of the Christian life isn't to do more and more stuff for God, or even to know more and more *about* God—*it's to know God more and more*: “This is eternal life, *that they may know You*, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). So, knowing God is what eternal life is all about. Not knowing *about* God, but *knowing God*. And not *doing* a lot of stuff for God. That's what Martha tried to do, remember, in Luke 10? Martha was so busy doing things for Jesus that she missed the whole point. We're told she was “distracted with all her preparations” (Luke 10:40); and the word used there is actually one of the words Scripture uses for *ministry* (in Acts 6:4 and 2 Timothy 4:5).<sup>101</sup> Martha was distracted with ministry. Doing a lot of stuff for Jesus, but her heart had become distant. Mary had chosen the good portion. The Christian life isn't about knowing about God—and it's not about doing things for God—it's about knowing and loving and walking with God. This is what God desires of us. This is the heart of the Christian life.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* Duncan goes on: “And note that the sign does not procure God's blessing—it confirms it. The bow in the cloud is not what got blessing for Noah. What got blessing for Noah is God's election of him, God's promise to him, and God's redemption of him. The bow is given to confirm those things, not to procure them, but to confirm what God had already done. And now the sign confirms all of those things. So the sign does not procure the blessing; the sign confirms it.”

<sup>101</sup> The Greek word is *diakonia*, from which we get the English word “deacon.”

## 10. The REQUIREMENTS of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn how grace and obedience fit together*

So, walking with God is the essence of the Christian life. God wants us to be a holy people who worship Him in spirit and truth; who seek Him and love Him and know Him more and more. But how is it exactly that our obedience as believers fits together with God's grace? How is it exactly, for believers, that the law fits together with the gospel? How are we to think about the role of our obedience as those under God's grace? Well, let's read together what Scripture says in Genesis 9:3-7:

*Genesis 9:3-7:* <sup>3</sup>Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant. <sup>4</sup>Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. <sup>5</sup>Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. <sup>6</sup>Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man. <sup>7</sup>As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.

This passages helps to show us a few ways that our Christian obedience fits together with God's grace:

*A) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is commanded.* In verse 3, God tells Noah and his sons that He has given every animal to them as food.<sup>102</sup> Then in verse 4, the Lord forbids Noah and his sons to eat flesh with its blood.<sup>103</sup> So here in verse 4 we have a command; *God is giving Noah and his sons a command.* Then, in verse 7, the Lord essentially repeats what He had said in verse 1: “As for you; be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply on it.” *This is another command* that the Lord is giving to Noah and his sons. And these commands are right in the middle of the covenant He's making with them; and as we've seen, this covenant is part of the Covenant of Grace. So what this means is that *there are commands in the Covenant of Grace*—God gives His people commands to obey. And if we love Him, we *will* keep His commands (John 14:15). Not perfectly, of course, as we even see later with Noah. But our lives will be characterized by obedience.

*B) In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is liberated.* Notice that God does not make His covenant with Noah and his sons contingent on their obedience. God gives them a command in verse 4, and again, in verses 1 and 7 there are more commands: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” So God gives believers commands. But none of these commands are what merits God's blessing. God had already blessed Noah and his sons—they had already entered into His blessing. God does not say in verse 4, “*If* you keep My command about the animals and their blood, *then* I will confirm My covenant with you.” God's covenant isn't based on their obedience at all. God's commands to Noah and his sons are radically and entirely different than His command to Adam in the garden. In the garden, Adam's continuance in God's blessing was based entirely on his obedience to God's command. But in the Covenant of Grace it doesn't work that way. In the Covenant of Grace, we obey God's commands—not in order to be accepted by God—but because we've already been accepted by God in Christ. We obey our heavenly father, not in order to sustain His favor, but because Christ has already and entirely secured His favor through His finished work on the cross. We obey, not as a *Covenant of Works* but as a *rule of life*; we obey not *for* life but rather *from* life.

<sup>102</sup> One thing that is important to see here is that this included both clean and unclean animals. Scripture had been distinguishing between clean and unclean animals throughout the account of Noah (Genesis 7:2,8-9; 8:20). So, when God tells Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9:3 that every animal has been given to them for food, we are to understand that as meaning both the clean and unclean animals. Under the Covenant of Grace, *all food* is clean. So, when Jesus declared all foods to be clean (Mark 7:19), this wasn't a completely new teaching. At the beginning, all food was clean. God would later give stipulations about what was clean and unclean under the Law—but it wasn't because certain foods are inherently bad. Old Testament ceremonial laws were never intended to be taken merely at face value (compare Deuteronomy 23:1-3 with Isaiah 56:3-7 regarding eunuchs and foreigners). God gave the food regulations in the Law as a temporary arrangement to teach us about holiness—to be a tangible reminder that God's people are to be a holy people—a people set apart from the world.

<sup>103</sup> In some parts of Asia, an important question that arises here is if New Testament believers are hereby forbidden from consuming the blood of animals. The sense of the command seems to be aimed at respecting the sacredness of life rather than forbidding the consumption of the blood of animals. Ainsworth writes: “*With the soul:* Or, ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the life;’ for so the soul often signifies: Job 2:6; John 10:15,17. *The blood:* This declares what the former meant; ‘in the soul,’ that is, ‘the blood;’ . . . So this law against eating ‘flesh with the life or blood,’ seems to be against cruelty, not to eat any part while the creature is alive, or the flesh not orderly mortified and cleansed of the blood; 1 Sam. 14:32-34, and this the reason following does confirm. Also the Hebrew Doctors. . . understand to forbid the eating of any member, or of the flesh of a beast taken from it alive.” (*Genesis 9:4*). Waltke says: “By forbidding the eating of blood, this regulation instills a respect for the sacredness of life and protects against wanton abuse. . . Adding meat to the human diet is ‘not a license for savagery.’” (p144).

C) *In the Covenant of Grace, obedience is crucial.* In Genesis 9:5-6, we see that there are consequences for sin. Here in verses 5-6, God is actually establishing the ordinance of capital punishment; the one who intentionally and unlawfully sheds the blood of another is to have his blood shed in return.<sup>104</sup> Paul referenced the same truth when he said in Romans 13:4 that the state does not bear the sword for nothing, “for it is a minister of God to you for good.” God has given to human governments the power of enforcing capital punishment. The death penalty in cases of murder is not contrary to Scripture—but actually commanded in Scripture. So, we see that there are consequences for sin. And the same principle is true for us as believers.<sup>105</sup> Being a Christian doesn't mean that there's no longer going to be earthly consequences for your sin. King David didn't lose his salvation when committed adultery with Bathsheba and indirectly murdered her husband. But he sure plunged himself into an ocean of misery. So being in the Covenant of Grace doesn't mean there won't be very real consequences for our sin in this life. We ought to greatly fear our sin as Christians.

#### 11. The PRIVILEGE of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn about the mission God has given His people*

We read in Genesis 9:1, “And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.'” We looked at this passage earlier in speaking about God's *blessing* of Noah. We saw how God is repeating here the same thing that He had spoken to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. And we saw that the reason this is so amazing was that when God blessed Adam, God was blessing a man who was not yet a sinner. But now, with Noah and his sons here in Genesis 9, God is repeating the same blessing *to sinners*. Through the atonement fore-pictured in Noah's burnt offerings, God is restoring to mankind the blessing that Adam had lost at the fall. Precious truths.

Well, what we're going to see here is that, in the Covenant of Grace, God is not only restoring the *blessing* of God—He's also restoring the *mission* of God. Just like the blessing of God, this command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth was the exact same command God had given to Adam back in Genesis 1:28. So, when the Lord said to Noah and his sons, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” He was restoring to redeemed sinners the sacred privilege of filling the earth with His glory. And this command to Noah and his sons doesn't only point us *backwards* in Scripture—it also points us *forward*—to Christ and the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Think about it this way:

“The first Adam failed to carry out God's mandate. Now Jesus, the last Adam, is fulfilling the original mandate which God gave to humanity. . . God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, and to subdue it for God's glory. Jesus, the second Adam, has taken up that task. Just as the first Adam had a bride to serve as his helper (Gen.2:18-25), so the second Adam has chosen a bride to serve as his helper: the Church (Eph. 5:29-32). Together with his bride, Jesus is fulfilling the original mandate by filling the earth with regenerated images of God, who in turn submit to God's rule and subdue the earth for his glory. To state it a little differently, the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, has now become the Great Commission. . .”<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> See Ainsworth, Calvin (a bit modified), O Palmer Robertson, etc. Ligon Duncan says: “Here see a direct command for capital punishment. . . So you see a nice little Hebrew parallelism here. He who sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, in that first phrase of Genesis 9:6. So this is not a statement of what will just inevitably happen, that when people kill, other people will kill them. This verse is explaining how God will demand an accounting for the manslayer, whether he is human or beast. . . like so many other principles, capital punishment existed prior to the Mosaic legislation as we see in Genesis chapter 9.” (*Covenant Theology* course). Waltke says: “The instruction about capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6) is set within the frame of the Lord's promise (8:20-22) and covenant (9:8-17), which is given to all humanity, to preserve all human life. In that context, the legislation to execute capital punishment pertains to all people (9:5-6). Capital punishment is founded upon the truth that all human beings bear the image of God, setting them apart from the rest of the living creatures. . . The legislation, 'whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed,' gives evidence that the civil authority as God's minister now has the responsibility to execute capital punishment for a capital offense.” (Waltke, pp157-58).

<sup>105</sup> Not only is this very principle of a life for a life reiterated in the Law, which was given as God's rule for the church, but the very giving of the principle is in the context of God's covenant in Genesis 9, which again, is part of the Covenant of Grace. Another example of this principle is the familiar refrain through the book of Deuteronomy: “that it may be well with you. . .”

<sup>106</sup> Taken from *The Cultural Mandate and Your Work Today*, Hugh Welchel, [theresurgence.com/2013/08/29](http://theresurgence.com/2013/08/29). The quote finishes, “. . . which God has given to Christ (Isa. 42:1-12; 49:1-26), and through Christ to the church (Matt.28:18-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8; 13:47; Rom. 15:18). We could even say it a little differently than that: the cultural mandate, which God gave to the first Adam and his bride, *has always been* the Great Commission. The mission to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it was never intended to be taken *only* in a physical, temporal kind of way. God's plan from the beginning was to fill the earth with His glory in the fullest possible sense (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14). Isaiah 27:6 says, “In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit.” The fruit

It's also good to be reminded again here of the context of Genesis 9:1. God gives this awesome privilege to Noah and his sons immediately after we are told that the flood hadn't cured man's nature. Genesis 8:21 reminds us that Noah and his sons are still a people that struggle with sin; they're still sinners. *So who is God going to use in powerful ways to fill the earth with His glory? Christians who still find themselves struggling with sin.* By the way, we see the same truth in Matthew 28. Who does Jesus send out in the Great Commission? Right before verse 18 we have verse 17: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; *but some were doubtful.*" These are the people Jesus was pleased to send out to the world and use to gather entire nations and kingdoms. Jesus is pleased to use us as His instruments—not just on our best days or when we're following Him the closest—but even in the midst of our worst failures and blunders. He uses us in the midst of our sin. He's pleased to use struggling, failing Christians—weak and broken vessels—to do wonderful things for His glory.

And this isn't just something for pastors or missionaries. If you're a believer in Jesus, this awesome privilege is for *you*, wherever He may call you to serve. Whether you're a minister or a mechanic or a mom—God has given you this *sacred privilege*—to fill your little section of the earth with His glory. Whoever you are, wherever you are; you can *teach, live, pray* and *give* to God's global mission of redemption. In Christ, your life has incredible eternal significance, whatever it is that you do.<sup>107</sup>

So, God gives His people a charge: "Be fruitful and multiply" (9:1,7). But again, God's covenant *is in no way conditional on us keeping this charge.* God doesn't say to Noah and his sons, "If you are fruitful and multiply, *then* I will confirm My covenant with you." God gives Noah and his sons a commission, but His covenant with Noah—His peace and blessing—was never based on obedience to that mission. And that's exactly the way it is in the gospel. God has given us commands. And God has given us a mission: to fill the earth with His glory. But God never says to us: "If you go and make disciples of all nations, *then* I will bless you and give you My peace. God has given us His blessing and peace to the fullest measure—and it's in that knowledge that we fill the earth with His glory.

## 12. The OUTCOME of the Covenant of Grace: *We learn of the sure hope we have in Christ*

When Noah stepped out of the ark, along with his family and the animals, he entered into a new world; an earth that had been purged of wickedness and recreated in holiness and righteousness.<sup>108</sup> Scripture emphasizes this when it tells us in Genesis 8:13 that the day the water was dried up from the earth was the first day of the first month of the first year since the flood. Now, on the one hand, this is to signify the new birth. Scripture refers to believers as "new creations" in Christ, because when God saves someone, everything about them becomes new—new desires, new longings, a new will, a new purpose, a new Lord.<sup>109</sup> Just as it was with the earth, we have become new creations in Christ. So in one sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers experience in *regeneration*.

But in another sense, this new world is pointing us to what believers will experience in *glorification*. When Noah and his family and the animals stepped off the ark, they became the inheritors of a new earth. And this is to signify the coming reality for all those in Christ. For, "according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:3-13).<sup>110</sup>

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Isaiah is talking about here isn't figs or grapes—it's the work of the Spirit imparting life and changing lives for the glory of God (See also Isaiah 4:2; 37:31; Hosea 14:4-8; John 15:1-5,8; Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22-23). God's desire from Genesis 1 was a people who worship Him in Spirit and truth. So when God said to Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," He was giving them (in Old Testament language) the sacred honor of participating in His global plan of redemption.

<sup>107</sup> We could add here that being fruitful and multiplying in the truest intended sense isn't just an awesome privilege God has given the redeemed—it's also one of the purposes of redemption: Romans 7:4 says, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, *in order that we might bear fruit for God.*" It may be that this truth is also being hinted at in the story of Noah. In light of what we discovered about the possible significance of the animals together with Noah on the ark, we may hear Romans 7:4 being echoed in Genesis 8:17, where the Lord said to Noah: "Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

<sup>108</sup> "They came out of the ark as out of the grave; and that into a new world." (Francis Roberts, p279).

<sup>109</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:15; 4:24; Colossians 3:10.

<sup>110</sup> See also 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and Revelation 21:1-8. Waltke says: "The theme of this *toledot*, the annihilation of the

Now, let's meditate on this theme of glorification a little more. Scripture tells us that every living thing that entered into the ark also went out together with Noah from the ark (8:17-19): "Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird. . .went out by their families from the ark" (v19). No life was lost through the storm. In the same way, Scripture tells us that Christ will bring home to glory with Him every single person who has been united to Him by faith—no exceptions. Jesus said, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). In Romans 8:29-30, Paul describes our hope of glory as believers with such certainty that he uses the past tense: "and these whom He justified, He also glorified." The reality of inheriting eternal glory is so certain for believers that we can talk about it in the past tense.<sup>111</sup>

God wants us to live in this hope. He could have saved us without letting us know all He had done and all He had promised to do. But He didn't do that—He wants us to know; He wants us to live in the absolute assurance that He who promised is faithful; that He will bring us home to glory. Friends, if you belong to Jesus, then you are inside the ark of salvation, and there is only one destination. You may feel like a lowly worm—but even the worms that boarded the ark were brought safely through to the new world! He will do what He promised; and He wants you and I to live upon that promise! He wants us to know that we are bound for glory. We may feel the wind and the waves—of course we will—but if we are in the ark we have nothing to fear. The day is quickly coming when we who have entered into the ark will again step out into a new world, to live and reign with Christ forever: "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

## V. A Few Final Applications from the Noahic Covenant

### 1. There are WARNINGS here:

*A) A warning to THE WORLD of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come:* Jesus said in Luke 17:26-27: "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." There is a warning for us here. The final judgment will come the same way that it did with the flood. There will be no time to suddenly change your mind; it will be like a lightning flash. *Now* is the acceptable time; *today* is the day of salvation. I'm not sure how Noah's neighbors reacted to his preaching. Maybe they laughed at him; maybe they ignored him. But then, one day, the door shut, and the sky began to get incredibly black. Perhaps it was a giant tsunami.<sup>112</sup> Maybe they saw a great wave from a distance and started banging on the ark for Noah to open the door. But it was too late. The final judgment is coming, whether the world is ready for it or not. Flee to Christ, the only ark of salvation.

*B) A warning to THE CHURCH of the coming of Christ and the judgment to come:* The warning isn't just for those *outside* of the church. Though Noah's son Ham was safe in the ark when the flood came, in the end he showed himself to be of the seed of the serpent (Genesis 9:20-27). He had been in the ark like the rest of Noah's family. He was a member of Noah's church. He was a covenant

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seed of the Serpent's kingdom and the earth they have corrupted and the preservation of the seed of the woman through it to a renewed earth, foreshadows the future destruction of this present, evil world by fire and the preservation of the faithful by the specified salvation in Christ to inherit a regenerated earth that will never pass away (Matt.24:30-31,37-39; Luke17:26-32; 2 Thess.1:5-9; 2Peter 3:6-7). The elect covenant family going through a sea of death and coming forth from their burial chamber (Isa.26:19-21) is a pledge that the redeemed will be brought through the cataclysm of the final judgment." (Waltke, pp151-52).

<sup>111</sup> And it's not only certain because God has *promised* it to His people; it's certain because God has *purposed* it for His people. This is hinted at in Genesis 7:2-3, "You shall take with you of every clean animal. . .and of the animals that are not clean. . .also of the birds of the sky. . .to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth." The whole reason the animals were kept in the ark was to repopulate the new world. This also points us to God's purposes for us in salvation. Ephesians 2:4-7 says, "But God, being rich in mercy. . .made us alive together with Christ. . .and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." In other words, the whole reason God saved us was in order that He might forever lavish the riches of His kindness upon us—not just in *this life*—but for *all eternity*. Paul says the same thing in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." We also see this dual foundation for assurance, both God's *promise* and God's *purpose*, in Hebrews 6:13-20.

<sup>112</sup> May be hinted at in Isaiah 54:9, where the Hebrew reads that God swore the waters would not "cross over" the earth again.

child, and a professor of the true religion. But it seems that after the flood had died down, he began to show his true colors. In the end, all his offspring are cursed. So it will be in the resurrection of the dead. Our Savior tells us that there will be *many* on that day who will be thrust out of the kingdom. But they are not atheists or Hindus or Muslims or Buddhists. They had been professors of the true religion. They were those who had called Jesus “Lord,” and even those who had healed and cast out demons in his name (Matt.7:21-23). Maybe some of them had been powerful preachers or the kind of Christians known for their incredible zeal for Christ. But you know what? They never really knew Christ. Just like Ham sat in the ark, all their lives they sat in the church. But they missed the reality. They were part of the *visible* church, but never true members of the church *invisible*. They busied themselves doing Christian things all their life, but they had never truly known Christ, and on the day of judgment they will be cast away. My friends: Don't let this happen to you.

## 2. There are COMFORTS here:

In God's dealings with Noah and his family in the ark, we are given a precious insight into the heart of God towards His people in the midst of all their distresses. Let's read Isaiah 54 one more time:

*Isaiah 54:9-11:* <sup>9</sup>For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. <sup>10</sup>For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken. <sup>11</sup>*O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. . .*

Verses 9-10 of Isaiah 54 teach us about the surety and stability of God's people in the Covenant of Grace—they refer back to the promise that God had made *after* the flood. But here in verse 11, we get a precious glimpse into God's disposition towards His people *in the midst* of the flood. Verse 11 tells us what God was experiencing as His people were being battered to and fro, and swept up and down on the waves in the ark. Listen to how one pastor describes God's words here in verse 11:

“There is no speech or passage which we find our God to utter in Scripture more pathetic or passionate than this. . .than to hear God, in the midst of their afflictions and temptations, cry out on the sudden, and with the greatest vehemency, *'O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempests, and not comforted!*. . .it is as if the dearest friend, or most loving husband or father, having his dearest relations of wife, and children, and friends in a ship at sea, and viewing them to sit within the rage of wild waves and winds, which he, standing himself safe on the immediate shore, sees and beholds with his own eyes, and at every bending of the ship near to a suppression under those waves, his heart beats, and he lamentably cries out at every toss and motion, and thinks with himself, how must their hearts be afflicted, and not comforted in the midst of all, that are shiftless and helpless in this storm, and know not what to do! Like to such a one doth God express his affections here.”<sup>113</sup>

Our days as pilgrims in this world are like Noah's voyage in the ark. The Lord has saved us from His judgment and brought us into the ark of salvation, who is our Savior, Jesus Christ. And we know that the day is coming soon when we will step out into a new world; a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells. But the voyage can be long. It can be hard. It can be scary. At times we are storm-tossed. We feel like we're reeling, and there's no comfort. We wonder, *where is God?* It's in those moments that we need to fight with all that we have to believe the truth expressed in this verse: God isn't unmoved by the sufferings and trials we go through in this life. He's not indifferent when we're hurting or reeling, or when we're lonely and scared. His heart goes out to us, even as He also sovereignly guides us. And the day is quickly coming when He will usher us home to himself.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Thomas Goodwin, *Works V9*, p75.

<sup>114</sup> “The ark was a great while tossed to and fro on the face of the flood, ready to be overwhelmed; but at last rested on a high mountain or rock, and the company in it had enlargement and liberty, and were brought into a new world. So the church in the Messiah's days is long in a state of affliction, tossed with tempest and not comforted (Isaiah 54:11). But when she is ready to be overwhelmed, God will lead her to the rock that is higher than she (Psalm 61:2), and she shall be brought out of her affliction into a new world (Isaiah 65:17-18), and shall dwell in God's holy mountain.” (Edwards, *Types of the Messiah*).